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Class Struggles In Portugal - Part 2

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Dictatorship of the Proletariat in China

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Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam

REVIEWED BY TRAN VAN DINH

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

First returns from the annual MR Associates appeal letter have been most encouraging. Both the number joining the Associates and the total amount of contributions through September are up more than 50 percent over last year. This is the biggest year-to-year increase any of us can remember. It is too soon to draw conclusions from this statistic, since the improvement may merely signify a prompter response this year to the appeal letter. Just as one swallow doesn't make a summer, so one month doesn't make a year. All we can do is thank those who have joined for their splendid response and urge others to follow suit.

MR's first years coincided with the most virulent period of McCarthyism, and we instituted a policy at that time of refusing to allow anyone access to the magazine's subscription list. We did not then have second-class mailing privileges, and it would have been difficult (though hardly impossible) for government snoopers to reconstruct the list from postal information. The policy has been maintained in force ever since, but it is clear that it no longer serves a useful purpose. The mailing is now done (second class) by a so-called fulfillment house (as is the case with most other magazines) and the post office could easily compile a sub list if it wanted to. In the meantime, refusal on our part to exchange lists with

(Continued on inside back cover)

CLASS STRUGGLES IN PORTUGAL—PART 2

By Paul M. Sweezy

In last month's Review of the Month I tried to provide background information necessary to an understanding of what is going on in Portugal approximately seventeen months after the armed forces coup which overthrew the fascist regime installed by Salazar in 1926. The socio-economic and class structure of the country, the character of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) which carried out the coup, the development of a full-fledged revolutionary process involving all classes of society, the form this process took in the period between April 1974 and the summer of 1975, and the beginnings of democratization of the armed forces as a whole—these were the main themes touched upon. In this second and final installment, I shall comment briefly on the political parties which, along with the MFA, are the main actors on the Portuguese political stage, going on to draw a few very tentative conclusions about what is obviously, even for those directly involved, a highly confused situation.

The Political Parties

If one judges by electoral strength, the main political parties in Portugal are the following (figures in parentheses

are the respective percentages of total votes polled in the elections to the constituent assembly last April): Socialist Party (38 percent), Popular Democratic Party (26 percent), Communist Party (12 percent), and the Portuguese Democratic Movement (6 percent). The last of these is the descendant of a Communist-front organization set up to participate in controlled elections after Salazar's replacement by Caetano in 1968, and for all practical purposes can be considered an arm of the CP. In electoral terms, therefore, there are three poles of attraction, ranging from Left to Right: the CP, the SP, and the PDP.

Of these the one with the longest history and the deepest roots is undoubtedly the CP. Formed, like most of the world's CPs, in the years immediately following the Russian Revolution, it engaged in underground activity from the very beginning of the fascist dictatorship and became by far the leading organizer and instigator of working-class struggles during the whole Salazar-Caetano period. Given the conditions of clandestinity in a small country like Portugal, the CP necessarily remained a cadre rather than a mass party; its leadership tended to alternate between jail and exile in Moscow; its ideas and style were in the nature of the case strongly Stalinist; and it never had the opportunity or the temptation to follow along what may be called the "national reformist" road of the French and Italian CPs. Despite, or perhaps it was because of, these characteristics, the Portuguese CP sank real roots in the working class and was in a much better position than any of the other political movements to spring into action when the iron grip of fascism was at last broken.

In contrast, the Socialist Party had only a shadowy existence under the dictatorship and seems all along to have been pretty much a one-man show of its leader, Mario Soares. According to Kenneth Maxwell, Soares's major political book (English title: *Portugal Silenced*) is

a catalogue of fluctuating friendships, acquaintances, minor tribulations, and brushes with the secret police. . . . His most spectacular dispute with Salazar was caused by his representation of the family of General Delgado in the still mysterious affair of his assassination. He was deported to São Tomé. Soares had also represented mem-

bers of the Melo family [a leading unit of the monopolistic bourgeoisie], and Jorge de Melo intervened to aid the deportee by proposing that Soares represent an important CUF [Portugal's largest industrial enterprise] subsidiary in the islands. Only Salazar's personal opposition prevented Soares from taking the job.

Of Soares's party, Maxwell writes:

The Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP) grew from the Portuguese Socialist Action founded in Geneva in 1964 and became a formal party at Bad Münstereifel, West Germany, in April 1973. It is a member of the socialist international. Soares is a strong "Europeanist" with close relations with the European social democrats. Willy Brandt, François Mitterand, Roy Hayward, and Jim Callaghan of the British Labor Party all arrived in Lisbon [after the coup] "to help." The European social democratic leaders also sent substantial funds to the PSP—trying to match the millions of dollars Communist parties in Eastern and Western Europe have sent to the PCP. (*New York Review of Books*, April 17, 1975, p. 33.)

One must add that what used to be at least part of the PSP's left wing split off to form the Popular Socialist Front (FSP) quite a while ago, and there have been press reports of further defections in the last few months. No one with the slightest knowledge of the history of European socialist and working-class organizations could believe for a minute that a party with the characteristics of the PSP could have any sympathy for a real socialist revolution, or indeed could be anything but counter-revolutionary in the context of fierce class struggles such as have raged in Portugal during the last year and a half.*

The PDP is an even flimsier construct than the PSP. It was founded after the coup and, according to Kenneth Maxwell, was accorded the full weight of his prestige as head of state by General Spínola. Maxwell goes on to describe the PDP as being

formed from the ranks of the reformers of the old regime and members of SEDES (Association for Economic and Social Devel-

* I must nevertheless record with sorrow that I met, both in Portugal and in France, serious socialists whose aversion to the PCP was so strong that they could not banish from their minds a wishful fantasy in which Soares and the PSP play the role of champions of the Portuguese revolution. In such cases, at least at this stage, rational argument is of no avail.

opment). This is an establishment group founded in 1970 that encompassed a wide spectrum of political tendencies dedicated to peaceful change and liberalization. (*Ibid.*, p. 32.)

In the atmosphere prevailing in Portugal after the downfall of the dictatorship, the PDP found it expedient to advertise itself as "socialist" while in practice becoming the political home for many members of the right-wing parties which were excluded by the MFA from the electoral process. Despite the "moderate" and "centrist" labels pinned on the PDP by the bourgeois press, it is in reality today the legal and officially recognized party of the Right.

This does not mean of course that the Portuguese reaction is solidly united behind the PDP any more than that the whole Left is represented by the Communist and Socialist parties. At both ends of the political spectrum there are organizations and tendencies which, whether by choice or not, are outside the electoral arena—and growing more, not less, important as the class struggle intensifies.

On the Right there are the Catholic Church and various other ostensibly non-political organizations,* as well as more or less underground fascist outfits supported by Portuguese in exile, the CIA, NATO agencies, etc. Among these and obviously with ambitions to become their unifier and leader is Spínola's Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Portugal. (One would like to ask the general why he left "socialist" out of the title of his movement: a democratic socialist fascism is only a little less plausible than Hitler's national socialist fascism, and it is clear that in Portugal today nobody has a patent on the socialist label.) That this far Right has a considerable mass base, at least in the North, is obvious from the extent and intensity of the "anti-Communist" mob violence it almost certainly played a major role in instigating and directing during the summer months. And the fact that the MFA, despite repeated pledges to crack down on disruptions of law and order from whatever source, was unable or unwilling to act effec-

* In this connection it is well to remember that in Chile it was the *gremios* (professional and trade associations) which played a key role in bringing down the Allende government.

tively against these disgraceful outbursts of violence raises serious questions about the possible role of the far Right in the crisis-ridden period which surely lies ahead. But the answers to these questions of course depend not only on the far Right and the MFA but also on the far Left and the armed forces as a whole.

In introducing the subject of the far Left, I must start with a warning: I have no inside information; I had a chance to talk seriously with only a few comrades from one organization (the MES—the Left Socialist Movement); and for the rest I can rely only on quite general impressions and an estimate, which could be wrong, of the potentialities and requirements of a very complicated situation. If I nevertheless venture a few remarks and opinions, it is because most readers know even less than I about the subject, and those who know more are quite likely to be personally involved in ways that make it extremely difficult for them to separate wishes from realities.

The first thing to note is the number and variety of far left organizations and parties. A “Glossary” in the Big Flame pamphlet cited in last month’s Review of the Month lists no fewer than ten such organizations.* Here are the Portuguese initials, the English names, and the brief identifying notes supplied in the Big Flame Glossary (listed alphabetically according to the first Portuguese initial):

AOC—Association of Workers and Agricultural Workers. A Marxist-Leninist organization with a strong base in some unions. It won the leadership of the chemical workers’ union from the PCP which it typifies as “social fascist.”

FSP—Popular Socialist Front, led by Manuel Serra, is a left split from the PS [Socialist Party].

LCI—International Communist League, a sympathizing organization of the Trotskyist Fourth International.

LUAR—League of Revolutionary Unity and Action, one of the oldest left organizations, involved in armed struggle before April 1974. Is still armed. A main instigator of military action against the attempted coups, and of house and land occupations.

* Big Flame, *Portugal: A Blaze of Freedom*, available from *Radical America*, P.O. Box B, North Cambridge, Mass. 02140 at \$1.00 a copy.

MES—Left Socialist Movement. Strong base in some sections of the working class, its politics are the far left of the Labor Party or the French PSU or maybe PDUP in Italy.

MRPP—Movement for the Reorganization of the Proletarian Party. Founded in 1970 to combat PCP revisionism. . . . It is dogmatic in its characterization of the PCP as social fascist, and supports the PS against them.

PRP-BR—Proletarian Revolutionary Party was born out of the Revolutionary Brigades (BR) which, as late as April 9, 1974, added another success to a three-year-long campaign of sabotage and armed struggle by sinking a naval vessel about to sail for Guinea-Bissau. The PRP has been instrumental in the formation of the revolutionary workers councils.

PUP—Marxist-Leninist Popular Unity Party.

UDP—Marxist-Leninist Popular Democratic Union.

URML—Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Union.

It is of course true that most (maybe all) capitalist countries have a somewhat similar array of parties and groups to the left of the Communists and social democrats, but this should not be taken to mean that the political situation on the Left in Portugal is basically the same as in, say, Italy or France. What is distinctive about the Portuguese case is that while a number of these organizations are what the French call *groupuscules*, i.e., small sects with no power and little influence, others are very much factors to be reckoned with in the overall political balance. Their membership and following are mainly in the working class, the intelligentsia, and the rank and file of the armed forces. Press coverage of this aspect of the Portuguese situation is of course extremely meager and unreliable, but revealing incidents are sometimes reported and first-hand observation continuously turns up evidence of the presence and importance of the far Left in the revolutionary process.

As an example of the latter I can cite a visit to the workshops of TAP, the Portuguese national airline, which, with a total labor force of over 6,000, is one of the largest enterprises in the country. The TAP workers have a history of struggle which long antedates the overthrow of the dictatorship and has gained them the reputation of being one of the leading contingents of the Portuguese proletariat. I visited TAP on June 12, as it happened, one day after enterprise-wide elections to a workers' commission consisting of ten manual workers and

nine clerical workers. Of these 19 elected representatives, five were from the Left Socialist Movement (MES), four from the Movement for the Reorganization of the Proletarian Party (MRPP) which is generally described as "Maoist,"* and the remaining ten were either independents or (as of that date) of uncertain affiliation. My informants, however, were quite positive that none of the ten was from the Communist Party. Inquiries elicited the information that this situation was by no means unusual.

To put this into proper perspective and at the same time to understand that it does not necessarily contradict stories appearing in the press to the effect that the overall trade union federation, the official title of which is Intersindical, is controlled by the CP, and that many national, regional, or local unions are battlegrounds between Communists and Socialists, one must recall that under the dictatorship the only kind of unions that existed were of the fascist labor-front variety, which of course did not represent the workers at all. The Communists had (quite properly) worked in these official unions for many years, trying to propagandize the workers and achieve gains, however small, in their behalf. With the fall of the dictatorship, the Communists were thus in the most favorable situation to seize control of the organizations, a course of action in which they were soon followed by the Socialists seeking to establish a base in the working class. In the meanwhile, however, workers at the plant level felt an imperative need to organize right in the workplace, largely, and in many cases probably entirely, for reasons having little to do with the usual trade-union functions of bargaining over wages and conditions of work, seeking redress of grievances, etc. As I pointed out in last month's MR, hundreds of establishments were occupied by their workers who were thus forced to take on management functions; in other cases, actions were mounted to purge fascists from management or ownership, or to force employers to reorganize work

* The MRPP, however, apparently does not have any special relationship with Peking. One of the smaller Marxist-Leninist parties has posters all over Lisbon showing its leader being greeted by a Chinese host in Peking.

processes and routines. For all these (and other) reasons workers needed organizational forms quite distinct from that of the trade union, and the most common solution was the election of workers' commissions by assemblies of employees, meeting all together or by divisions or departments.* At this level the Communists, and still less the Socialists, had no special advantages: in fact, quite the contrary, since these parties aimed to establish their influence in the working class via the unions, and hence tended to look upon the workers' commissions as rivals to be downgraded. In these circumstances, the field was relatively open to the far left groups which moved in and made the most of the rich opportunities opened up to them by the development of a genuine revolutionary process. As often happens in history, the Communists were in a sense victimized by their own previous experiences and successes, while the younger and less experienced far left organizations came forward to assume new responsibilities and fill new needs.

It was the far Left which also provided the initiative and leadership in organizing councils of representatives from various plants in an area, plus representatives of neighborhood groups (*moradores* = tenants, residents) and of any military barracks which might be nearby. This form of organization was also encouraged by the MFA which hoped in this way to establish the *MFA-Povo* (MFA-People) alliance proclaimed in posters all over the country and to free the MFA from too close a dependence on political parties. This too was threatening to the bureaucratic structures of the CP (which the SP was trying its best to emulate) and led to strange forms of counterattack. While I was in Portugal the CP launched a movement to form brand-new committees for the defense of the revolution

* I attended a meeting of the executive committee of the southern region of the textile workers union, in the course of which a union spokesman presented a lengthy and very useful review of working-class history under and since the dictatorship. My notes contain the following: "Two months after April 25, 1974, practically every plant in Portugal had its own workers' commission." At that meeting I also learned that about 10 percent of Portuguese workers are employed in the textile and clothing industries, which account for some 20 percent of Portugal's exports. Shades of Ricardo, who thought Portugal was fit only to produce wine and should import its textiles from Britain!

on the Cuban model—oblivious to the fact that, as the MES was quick to point out, you cannot defend a revolution that has not taken place.

I am unable to judge how much headway the council movement (in revolutionary history, of course, council is simply the Western translation of the Russian *soviet*) had made when I was there, and I have no way of knowing how much more it may have advanced since then. I will only say that it is undoubtedly a serious movement which probably could under certain circumstances deepen and spread to become the dominant organizational form of the Portuguese revolutionary process.

In the meantime the position and role of the Communist Party have been undergoing certain changes, the full extent and significance of which remain to be clarified. Originally, the CP seems to have believed that because of its long experience and its superior organizational strength it could in effect become the political arm of the MFA. Acting on this assumption, it moved rapidly to infiltrate and take over key positions at all levels of government, in the trade unions, and in the mass media. Toward the masses its attitude was high-handed and bureaucratic. It supported unpopular government measures even to the point of strike-breaking and opposing “excessive” increases in the minimum wage. It excoriated all groups to the left of it as adventurists, pseudo-revolutionaries, etc. When I was in Portugal it was promoting a rather ridiculous “battle of production,” urging workers to work harder, do volunteer labor on free days, etc., at a time when unemployment was increasing and every worker knew that inventories were heavy with unsold goods. Above all, as I have already pointed out, the CP neglected the urgent need of the masses for new forms of organization in factories, offices, and neighborhoods, thus opening the way for the far Left to move in and establish firm bases in the working class. As a result of all these acts of commission and omission, the CP created many enemies and isolated itself from large segments of the very masses it sought to lead. Just how far this process had gone became clear during the summer months when the far Right, skillfully sensing the vulnerability of the CP, singled it out as the sole target of the

vicious campaign of counter-revolutionary violence and vandalism which swept across the North in July and August. The whole Left and every democrat worthy of the name should have reacted with a mass upsurge of indignation and protest, but nothing of the sort happened. Even a half-hour protest strike called by the CP-controlled Intersindical met with very little response in Lisbon, scene of innumerable strikes, take-overs, and demonstrations in preceding months. The feeling that the CP was getting what it deserved was apparently so deep and widespread that it clouded the political judgment of many who should have recognized the fascist offensive as the terrible danger signal it most certainly was.

It must have been the shock of learning the true extent of its isolation that finally led the CP to change course. (It may also have been pressure by cadres and rank-and-file militants on the leadership, but I have no information to support or refute this hypothesis.) What happened essentially was that it climbed down off its high horse and stopped pretending that it was the only legitimate leader and spokesman of the Portuguese revolution. It did this in the context of the struggle, both inside and outside the MFA, to remove General Gonçalves from the post of prime minister. The General's main political support had all along come from the CP, with the result that opposition to the CP was automatically translated into opposition to Gonçalves.* Outside the MFA this opposition consisted not

* In fairness to a man of honor and principle, it should be emphasized that Gonçalves was never a tool or stooge of the CP or anyone else. Marcel Niedergang, writing from Lisbon in *Le Monde* of August 13, paid this tribute to the General: "Of the three [composing the triumvirate of generals to whom the MFA delegated supreme authority for a few weeks during the summer], General Gonçalves is the most convinced and the most convincing, the most sincere, the most devoted to his cause, excessive, passionate, intransigent, a Saint-Just in uniform, thin and tormented: '*No freedom for the enemies of freedom.*' . . . It is said that he has the ardent faith of a neophyte. Not so: as long ago as 1961 Gonçalves conspired against Salazar, at the risk of his life, alongside militants of the CP or of the extreme Left. What brings him closest to the leaders of the PCP is perhaps not so much effectiveness, method, and ideology as the memory of clandestine and courageous struggles of fifteen years ago." At the time of his departure from office, the *New York Times* speculated that this almost certainly did not signal his withdrawal from the Portuguese political scene. One hopes not.

only of the Socialist and Popular Democratic parties but also of the Maoists and some other elements of the far Left. Inside the MFA it brought together in an uneasy alliance the so-called "moderates" led by the former foreign minister Major Melo Antunes and the group around General Carvalho, the commander of COPCON. Writing on the "Conflicting Tendencies," *Le Monde's* special correspondent in Lisbon, Dominique Pouchin, had this to say in the issue of August 19:

The Communist Party itself seems to have decided not to accompany the prime minister to the end, sharing with him only his isolation. Caught short by the growing dissensions in the MFA, the CP is feeling its way to a new course. It refrains from taking a public position on the documents of the various factions. Its militants loudly demand "unity of the MFA." But, discreetly, the leaders are turning to the left and seeking to approach the "revolutionary project" elaborated by the most radical wing of the army. One could not otherwise explain a visit of a member of the central committee to the leaders of the Proletarian Revolutionary Party (PRP), generally credited with being the inspirers if not the authors of the COPCON text.*

The following week Pouchin, reporting in *Le Monde* of August 27, noting that meetings of the MFA concluded on August 25 seemed on balance to favor the Left, went on to say:

The left and extreme left, military and civilian, will doubtless seek to capitalize rapidly on the gains achieved on the 25th. For this they now have a "unitary front." The agreement reached during the night of August 24-25 between the Communist Party and a certain number of movements of the extreme left gives to the progressive and radical officers a base which was previously lacking. They have themselves pushed for the formation of the "front," playing the role of coordinator. . . .

The Communist Party, the Portuguese Democratic Movement (MDP) and six organizations of the extreme left—the League of Revolutionary Unity and Action (LUAR), the Popular Socialist Front (FSP), the International Communist League (LCI—Trotskyist), the Proletarian Revolutionary Party (PRP), the Left Socialist Movement (MES), and the May First Group**—agree to support General Vasco Gonçalves [who had not yet resigned] until

* I should perhaps add that most of the people I talked to in Lisbon seemed to take it for granted that Carvalho was close to the PRP.

** I have no information on the May First Group.

the conditions for the establishment of a "*government of revolutionary unity*" are fulfilled. . . . The signatories of the "platform of August 25" intend to open their front to organizations and to revolutionary militants, to the MFA, and to autonomous organs of popular power. They have decided to set up a provisional secretariat which should be able to initiate actions aiming at a common offensive "*against reaction*" and for the "*development of the revolutionary process*." Only the Maoist tendencies have refused to participate in the front, explaining that they do not wish to sit down at the same table with "social fascists." The first initiative of the front is the calling of a big mass demonstration in Lisbon on August 27. What is at stake, say the signatories, is to open "*a powerful offensive against fascism, social democracy, and imperialism*."

Splendid "Maoists" these, afraid to sully their revolutionary purity by sitting down at the same table with representatives of what is still probably the largest working-class party in Portugal! How they must have quaked in their boots for the Chairman when he sat down at the same table with Chiang Kai-shek, the butcher of the Chinese working class, or Richard Nixon, the bloodiest imperialist at least since Hitler!

As for those of us who are less worried about whom we sit down with, we can only see the formation of a unitary front on the Left for the "development of the revolutionary process" and against "fascism, social democracy, and imperialism" as a positive and potentially very important step forward. It is true that, according to the latest information available to us at the time of writing, a rift in the front occurred within a week of its formation, as a result of CP overtures to the Socialists. Dominique Pouchin reports as follows (*Le Monde*, September 3):

The situation of the Communists is difficult. Will they have to pay for their hesitant policy? Their "opening" to the Right brought about their "exclusion" from the unitary revolutionary front of which they were the main component. The organizations of the extreme left with which they had allied themselves reproach the Communist Party with "opening the door to conciliation with the civilian and military forces which are acting as the spearhead for capitalism and imperialism." The provisional secretariat established on August 25 therefore decided to remove the representative of the Communist Party. Curiously, the Portuguese Democratic Movement (MDP), faithful ally of the CP, decided to remain in the front, without however approving of the "ostracism" of the Communists.

What this seems to indicate is that as of early September the CP had not really made up its mind between a united-front policy with the other elements of the Left and a policy of maneuvering on the terrain of bourgeois politics. In view of its past history and the kind of advice it is doubtless getting from the other Communist parties of Europe, East as well as West, this is hardly surprising. But whatever may happen in the immediate future, the PCP has at any rate publicly conceded the admissibility in principle of recognizing and cooperating with revolutionary parties and groups to the left of it which only a few short weeks ago it was poooh-pooohing as insignificant or abusing as objectively counter-revolutionary. If the road ahead in Portugal is as rocky as it gives every indication of being, the CP will surely be tempted, and perhaps forced by its enemies on the Right and its own militants on the Left, to return to the united-front policy as its best hope of survival. Many of us who have been anxiously following events in Portugal these past few hectic months are likely to feel very strongly that such a decisive turn to the Left by the PCP cannot come too soon.

Meanwhile, what is to be said of the prospects of the new government being formed under the premiership of the navy chief of staff Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo, which will apparently include a large contingent of ministers from the Socialist and Popular Democratic parties and from which the Communists will be all but squeezed out?

These prospects, to put it mildly, are not brilliant. The Portuguese economy is in a shambles; it remains, despite various reforms and nationalizations, a capitalist economy; and those who have now acquired power at the formal governmental level have made it abundantly clear that they have no desire to push for further changes at this time but rather intend to slow down, retrench here and there, and seek the cooperation of the private sector at home and of Portugal's richer European neighbors abroad. This situation gives rise to a certain logic which will assert itself despite all protestations of fidelity to ultimate socialist goals, however sincerely intended. Engels brilliantly summed up this logic in a letter to Danielson of June 18, 1892:

All governments, be they ever so independent, are *en dernier lieu* [in the last analysis] but the executors of the economic necessities of the national situation. They may do this in various ways, good, bad, and indifferent; they may accelerate or retard the economic development and its political and juridical consequences, but in the end they must follow it.

In Portugal the “national situation” is a capitalist economy in crisis. It makes sense to propose, as the revolutionary Left is proposing, that the system be overthrown and a process of socialist transition be instituted. But barring that, the only meaningful alternative is to give the capitalists, be they Portuguese or foreign, whatever may be necessary to restore their confidence and persuade them to start investing again—after a virtually complete hiatus of a year and a half—on a scale sufficient to reverse the present downward trend of the economy.

No one can say precisely what this means in concrete terms, but it would certainly include near the top of the list the restoration of authority and discipline in the labor process in both the private and public sectors, and in forms satisfactory to the capitalists. Austerity, of course (for the mass of consumers). Ownership guarantees and improved incentives for entrepreneurs. Subordination of foreign policy, economic and otherwise, to dictates of foreign bankers and government lending agencies. But why go on? Recent history is replete with examples of what it means for a small capitalist country to try to struggle out of a crisis without changing its socio-economic system.* The crisis may be overcome, at least for a while, but a frightful price is invariably paid by the masses in terms of their living standards and of the nation in terms of its independence.

I hasten to add that things have gone so far in Portugal that it is far from clear that the capitalists of Portugal and Europe can be adequately reassured by a government like that now about to take office. The Socialists and Popular Democrats have shown themselves to be very weak reeds to lean on; the MFA is divided; a large part of the working class is under revolutionary leadership. Sure, the present government is better

* For richly illustrative case studies see Cheryl Payer, *The Debt Trap: The IMF and the Third World* (Monthly Review Press, 1975).

than the last one from the capitalists' point of view, but why be satisfied with a messy half-way solution? Why not put the screws on and wait until "responsible" people take over and put Portugal's house back in order? That would be a return to Salazarism, you say? Well, maybe not exactly, and in any case the bourgeoisies of Portugal and Europe were quite happy with Salazarism for a half century. We know that they prefer parliamentary democracies, but after all democracy is a luxury which poor small countries like Portugal may not be able to afford. First things first, you know.

The outlook for this sixth (or is it the seventh?) provisional government is thus gloomy at best. If it succeeds, it will betray what it claims to stand for; and if it fails, it will bring the country face to face with a political crisis which may make that of the last two months seem minor by comparison. For at that time the choice will no longer be between an impotent "government" led by a Vasco Gonçalves and one led by a Pinheiro de Azevedo but between real revolution and naked counter-revolution.

If this analysis is correct, the period now opening will be very far from the calm and order and consolidation which well-meaning people, both inside and outside Portugal, profess to see as the country's most urgent needs. On the surface it will probably be characterized by continuing indecision and confusion. But underneath it will be a period of feverish preparations for the coming showdown. The line-up on the Right is already clear enough, the main open question being how large a proportion of the armed forces' officer corps will go over to the counter-revolution when the chips are down.

The situation on the Left is much less clear. How will the Communists analyze the situation and what role will they seek to play? What choice will the so-called "moderates" in the MFA make when it becomes clear that the class struggle in Portugal has already turned moderation into a utopian dream? How far and how fast will the mass movement develop? And, perhaps most important, what is happening and what will happen in the near future among rank-and-file soldiers and sailors? These are all questions to which answers may not be long in coming.

(September 17, 1975)

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT IN CHINA

BY JOHN EHRENREICH

At the edge of the playground of a primary school in Loyang, in central China, stands a billboard: "Study well the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat; make the school a training ground in the dictatorship of the proletariat," it says, in large letters. Inside the school, an eleven-year-old boy stands at the front of a classroom, beneath a chalked slogan: "Learn the theory by telling stories." He explains to his classmates how costly revisionism has been to the people of the Soviet Union. Some Soviet leaders, he says, had said that once the revolution was over, there was no need to emphasize the dictatorship of the proletariat. "But that's nonsense," says the boy:

The story of the Soviet Union tells us the importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the present time in our country it is possible for a handful of people to appear in the Communist Party and among workers who would want to restore capitalism. It is important to strengthen our education with proletarian ideas in order to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat.

John Ehrenreich is co-author of *Long March, Short Spring* and *The American Health Empire*. He visited China in the spring of 1975 as a member of a *Guardian*-sponsored "political activists" group.

Nearby, in a furniture factory, a great red, yellow, and black banner stretches across the workshop where sawdust and shavings, the waste from the wood-working in other parts of the factory, are pressed into composition board: "Study well the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat," it says. The Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the factory explains that workers meet here three times a week for political study of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They meet for an hour each time. They also form study groups by themselves. . . . They compare their study with their work to see what is right about their work and what is wrong with it and how to correct it. . . . If they see anything wrong, they report it to the party or to the Revolutionary Committee for discussion and correction.

On the Feng Hoa Production Brigade of the Feng Hoa People's Commune, 100 kilometers from Sian, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee tells of the brigade's plans:

Eighty percent of our labor is still by hand. Our goal is full mechanization by 1980. We will buy tractors and combines and other machines. . . . At present more than a third of the brigade members are living in [new housing]. By 1980, all members will. And . . . we will also build an auditorium for plays and get televisions. Of course, to achieve all these things we must first of all study the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and constantly do work to change the nature of individual farming.

Five hundred miles away, at the camp of the 196th Division of the People's Liberation Army, the Division propaganda team puts on a show. The first number is a song called "Consolidate the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and March Forever Forward."

All over China in the spring and summer of 1975, people are engaged in the movement to "deepen the study of the dictatorship of the proletariat and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat." The movement is described by the Chinese as a continuation and a deepening of last year's Movement to Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius."^{*} The new movement was launched by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party

* Numbered notes will be found at the end of the article.

in February 1975, shortly after the conclusion of the Fourth National People's Congress. It is, in most cases, not a "movement," but a mass study program.* As in the Movement to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius before it, the question of what concrete local changes it should lead to has been left open by Party leadership.

The phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" does not come easily to American lips. It reeks of Stalinism. Here is China, 25 years after liberation. Can the danger of capitalist counter-revolution still be so great that it is necessary to speak in terms of a continued dictatorship? What do the Chinese mean by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and why do they think it is necessary?

The heart of the theory which the Chinese are now studying is Mao's assertion that class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat continues throughout the period of socialism. It comes as no surprise, of course, that the class struggle does not instantly disappear following a Communist seizure of power. Many of the former landlords and capitalists and their children are still alive, nursing their hatred for the new order. China is surrounded by hostile imperialist countries, eager to foment division and disruption within China. And even among the workers and peasants, old ideas, inculcated by thousands of years of feudalism and comprador capitalism, hang on. But the Chinese say that this is only a small part of the problem. The deeper danger of capitalist restoration does not come from imperialism or from the hangovers of the past. The real danger is that, as they put it, *a socialist society itself continuously engenders new bourgeois privileges and ideas and, ultimately, people in whose interest it is to restore capitalism.* And it is for this

* The study generally begins with 33 quotations from Marx, Engels, and Lenin on the dictatorship of the proletariat, reprinted in *Peking Review* No. 9 (March 14, 1975) and with two articles, "On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship Over the Bourgeoisie" by Deputy Premier Chang Chun-chiao, *Peking Review* No. 14 (April 4, 1975), and "On the Social Basis of the Lin Piao Anti-Party Clique," by Yao Wen-yuan, *Peking Review* No. 10 (March 7, 1975). Both Chang and Yao are members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and were associated with the "radical" faction during the Cultural Revolution.

reason, say the Chinese, that the dictatorship of the proletariat must continue to operate *throughout* the entire period of socialism, and can die out only when full communism is achieved and the state "withers away."

How can this be? How can a socialist society "engender" a new bourgeoisie? The Chinese explain it this way: China, they say, is a socialist country. Like other socialist countries, it has inherited many features of its social structure from capitalism. Chinese society is characterized by "the three differences" (or "the three gaps")—the differences between city and countryside, between worker and peasant, and between mental and manual labor. There are still marked differences in the degree of economic and cultural development and well-being between different regions of the country and between town and country. In the countryside, collective ownership prevails, with peasants receiving a share of the profits of their collective; many peasants still maintain small private garden patches as well. In the city, for the most part, factories and shops are state-owned; workers receive a fixed salary and all profits revert to the state. Factory workers in general earn more than peasants. Since they are likely to live in a city, they have cultural advantages—better health-care facilities, more adequate schools, more access to movies, plays, art exhibits, and other recreational opportunities, etc. And in both city and country, mental workers—managers, officials, professionals, technicians—earn more than manual workers, have higher educational levels, tend to have more "interesting" jobs, and are often in positions where they have power over manual workers.

In many other respects, China still shows relics of its pre-revolutionary past. According to Mao:

China is a socialist country. Before liberation, she was much the same as capitalism. Even now she practices an eight-grade wage system, distribution to each according to his work, and exchange by means of money, which are scarcely different from those in the old society. What is different is that the system of ownership has changed.²

To put it another way, China is a socialist society: the bourgeois system of ownership of the means of production has been overturned. But, as Marx noted in *The Critique of the*

Gotha Program, socialism is a transitional state between capitalism and communism. It retains many of the social relations characteristic of capitalist society, e.g., unequal distribution of wages, commodity production and exchange, and gaps between town and country and mental and physical labor. (These are remnants of what the Chinese, echoing Marx, call "bourgeois right.") Since many of the social relations of capitalism remain, so do the associated class-based ideas. For example, money remains important, and different workers earn different incomes. Thus the possibility of one worker or one enterprise accumulating wealth still exists; from this possibility might arise the desire to amass fortunes, the craving for profits, even graft and corruption. Similarly, the advantages and powers of mental workers clearly contain the roots of a "new class," which could gradually take over real control of the means of production (regardless of the juridical arrangements) and seek to preserve control for themselves and their children. It is in phenomena such as these, say the Chinese, that the roots of revisionism and capitalist restoration lie.

Because the Chinese Communist Party sees the danger of revisionism as inherent in the structure of a socialist society, it insists that the dictatorship of the proletariat must be emphasized throughout the entire period of socialism (i.e., as long as the old social relations remain). This position contrasts sharply with the view that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be needed only during the transitional period while the revolution was being consolidated.* The Chinese analysis also defines the content of the dictatorship of the proletariat. First, a continuous effort must be made to restrict bourgeois right and

* It should be said that the Chinese view, emphasizing bourgeois ideas being continuously re-engendered by socialist society, is presaged in various passages in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin; and the Chinese make much of this (see, for example, the "33 quotations" in *Peking Review* No. 9 and Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, Chapter 4). Nevertheless, most traditional "Leninist" writing has emphasized the dictatorship of the proletariat as being associated with the idea of the necessity of *smashing* the old state apparatus (in contradistinction to the notion that the bourgeois state apparatus could be used to construct socialism) and the need to defend against foreign threats, not with dealing with problems *created* by the *new* system.

privilege—i.e., to prevent the differences and privileges from growing and getting out of control. Second, an effort must be made to begin systematically and consciously to eliminate the conditions which engender bourgeois right—i.e., poverty, the “three differences,” inequitable distribution.

The historical task of the proletarian dictatorship is not only to completely defeat the resistance of the exploiters and smash acts of aggression and subversion by imperialism and social imperialism, but also to restrict bourgeois right and create mechanisms for gradually eliminating it, wipe out all vestiges of the old society, and “create conditions in which it will be impossible for the bourgeoisie to exist or for a new bourgeoisie to arise.”³

Members of our group asked the Chinese repeatedly why some of these forms of “bourgeois right” couldn’t be eliminated immediately. For example, why couldn’t there be a rapid move toward a more egalitarian wage system, with need considered in setting wages? We received two answers: material conditions do not permit it; and the people are not ideologically ready for it. China is not affluent enough to give everyone what they need, regardless of work.

Instead of having too big a supply of commodities, our country does not yet have a great abundance of them. So long as the communes cannot yet offer much to be “communized” with production brigades and teams, and enterprises under ownership by the whole people cannot offer a great abundance of products for distribution according to need among our 800 million people, we will have to continue with commodity production, exchange through money, and distribution according to work. We have taken and will continue to take proper measures to curb the harm caused by these things.⁴

But it is not only material conditions, but the “level of consciousness” of the people, as well, that limits how far you can go in uprooting bourgeois social relations and practices. The Chinese assign a central role to consciousness. On the one hand, they do not believe that bourgeois ideas will simply wither away as a socialist society develops. The old ideas must be actively combatted; socialist people are created through ceaseless struggle against the old ideas. Conversely, the Chinese believe that the assault on the old ideas is possible long before the “objective conditions” have changed. In fact, changing

consciousness is a necessary condition for changing the institutions of the society. Despite the survival of conditions which engender revisionism (or rather, because of them), the Chinese insist that it is essential to "combat self-interest, combat revisionism."

The Chinese build an impressive case for their contention that the dictatorship of the proletariat remains central throughout the entire period of socialism. But, given the historical experience of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the Soviet Union, it is impossible not to retain some reservations. The dictatorship of the proletariat is in theory a dictatorship exercised *by* the proletariat, through the state organs and under the leadership of the Communist Party, *over* the bourgeoisie. It is not a dictatorship over the workers themselves. But in practice, in China, the dictatorship is wielded not by the working people as a whole but by the Chinese Communist Party; and it is the Party itself which has advanced the explanation of why continued dictatorship is needed. The relationship between the Party and the people thus becomes the major theoretical and practical question in understanding and evaluating the Chinese contention. A full discussion of the theoretical aspects of this question is beyond the scope of this paper, and an evaluation of how the Party actually functions in relation to the people in China is beyond the scope of my knowledge. I would only make two brief comments:

On the one hand, it is easy enough to be cynical. It is disquieting that the Party membership includes a disproportionately high percentage of managers, officials, army officers, judges, and the like—the very groups which according to the Chinese analysis are likely to be breeding grounds for bourgeois privilege. But on the other hand, the Chinese Communist Party has been unique among Communist parties in its willingness to open itself up to criticism from the people: "Bombard the Headquarters" was the slogan of the Cultural Revolution; the Movement to Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius was a warning to struggle against authoritarianism and elitism from any source. And in the current movement, the Party is offering the people the theoretical tools which could be used against the Party itself.

How have the people used these tools? Every place we went, in factories, schools, farms, hospitals, we asked the workers and officials we met to give us specific examples of how they were trying to restrict bourgeois right and privilege in their institution and how they were trying to narrow the three differences. Often the answers seemed rather general. In part this was because the movement was only a few months old; in many places those months had been spent in study and the workers or students or peasants were just now beginning to apply the results of the study to their own workplace. Also, since the current movement draws in many ways on past movements (the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Movement to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius), practices begun in the past were sometimes dressed up in the terminology of the present movement.

The most commonly described result of the movement was the effort to narrow the gap between mental and physical labor and to restrict the privileges of mental workers. For many years, officials and managers of all sorts have been expected to spend part of their time working in factories or in the countryside. But, we were told, popular pressure on them to do so has been sharply increased, and the amount of time they spend in productive labor has grown. At a furniture factory in Loyang, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee told us:

Some workers . . . raised the suggestion that for a period of time, the cadres on the Revolutionary Committee didn't take an active enough part in productive labor. After discussing this, the Revolutionary Committee agreed that the workers were right, and it was corrected. Last year the cadres spent on the average 150 days working in the workshops. In this way the relationship between cadres and workers was strengthened.

At Feng Hoa Production Brigade near Sian we were told: "We have narrowed the gap between mental and physical labor. Cadres must take part in productive labor. Seventy to eighty percent of the cadres do the same amount of work as ordinary commune members."

At the pace-setting Tachai People's Commune, the "rule of one, two, three" is followed: cadres at the county level are expected to put in one hundred days of productive labor a year;

at the commune level they are expected to do two hundred days a year; and at the brigade level, three hundred days a year.

Everyone in China works in factories or fields at least part of the year. At the Norman Bethune International Peace Hospital, in Shih Chia Chuang, there is a farm where pigs, cows, fruit, vegetables, grain, and herbs (for herbal medicines) are raised. Doctors and nurses spend at least half a day a week doing farm chores, and at harvest time they go out into the countryside for various lengths of time to help bring in the harvest. Students spend part of each year working in the countryside—even five- and six-year-olds spend some time—and following graduation from middle school, at least two years on a farm or in a factory are obligatory. Even the atomic physicists, we were told (though we had no way of checking, of course), spend time working at ordinary labor.

We were also told of efforts to deal with the other differences, those between worker and peasant and between town and countryside. At the Hsiyang County cement factory, near Tachai, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee told us:

Now we are studying the important instructions by our great leader Chairman Mao and trying to narrow the gap between the three differences and to restrict bourgeois right. . . . The measures we have adopted are that the cadres become workers, the workers become commune members, and the commune members become workers.

The workers in the factory were initially recruited from the nearby agricultural communes. In the future,

every three to five years the workers in the factory will go back to be commune members, and different commune members will come to the factory. . . . We are trying to turn out peasant-workers. After this technical work in the factory, they can go back to the production brigade on the commune and carry out agriculture, since mechanization is being carried out on the communes. . . . In this way, industry and agriculture support each other. . . . We are now experimenting with training peasant-workers so it will take us some time to summarize our experience.

This system of rotation of people, from farm to factory to farm again, is being considered in many other places, we were told.

As for the gap between city and countryside, one approach is to consolidate tiny peasant villages into larger towns, capable of sustaining a higher cultural level. At the Wu Chia Ping Production Brigade of the Tachai People's Commune, for instance, there used to be three separate small villages, none with more than 100 households. Now the peasants have built a "New Socialist Village," comprising 480 houses, 320 stone caves, and 3 common buildings.

Another emphasis in practical work is to make the system of distribution of goods and services more equitable. At the Feng Hoa Production Brigade, private ownership of housing has been abolished, and the new housing is distributed according to need at a nominal rent.

We have the principle of building houses by the collective and distributing them according to the need of the members. The houses are owned by the brigade. This has changed thousands of years of private ownership of houses. We do this to draw the attention of the people from private things to collective things.

In the same brigade,

we also restrict the distribution according to the work one has done. In this respect we criticize ourselves for the wrong ideas and criticize Liu Shao-chi's idea of the "three alls"—eat all, distribute all, use all. The [cash] income for each commune member is now 110-120 yuan per year. The rest of the commune income goes to the collective. In four or five years, as production develops, we may raise the income of each of the commune members to 150 yuan. We could give each member 150 yuan now, but we want to leave the money to develop the collective. To think of the revolution, we must think of the working class.

At another production brigade, Wu Chia Ping, in the Tachai People's Commune, the differences in wages have been sharply reduced:

In the past, the same able-bodied persons got different numbers of work points. There was a considerable gap, from 8 to 30 workpoints a day for the same labor. Now the difference has been reduced. Now the system is, you say how many workpoints you think you should get, and it's discussed and decided by the masses. Now, because we know we are working for the revolution, the gap has been reduced. Now the gap goes from 9.8 to 10 workpoints a day for the same labor.

At this brigade, teachers and doctors also earn essentially the same as the peasants.

In several places, we were told of direct efforts at restricting or preventing the emergence of privileges and of efforts at combatting bourgeois ideas. At one production brigade, we asked about the private pig pens which many members of the brigade kept. What if a peasant's pig bore a large litter, we asked. Couldn't this lead to the accumulation of wealth by a few peasants? For one thing, we were told, "families don't have the food to feed lots of pigs. . . . But if despite this, a family wanted only to raise pigs and not take part in collective labor, they would be restricted. This is part of restricting bourgeois right." At the same brigade, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee told us:

Before liberation, officials lorded it over the people. In New China, the cadres should serve the people and be the "oxen of the masses." They should work harder than the masses. We should leave convenience to the people and keep the difficulties for ourselves. For instance, with the new houses, commune members get them first, before the cadres.

And a teacher at the Foreign Languages Institute in Peking told us of the self-criticism the English teachers had made of themselves as a result of the current movement. One of the things criticized, she told us, was the tendency to see knowledge as "private property." For instance, one teacher had prepared curricular aids for her students, but hadn't shared them with the other teachers, in the hopes that her students would excel and she would shine in their reflected light. But after the study group discussed this, she realized that she had been pursuing her own self-interest, not the common good, and she began to share her materials with other faculty members.

Why did the Movement to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius end and the new Movement to Deepen the Study of the Theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat begin? In the Western bourgeois press, the Fourth National People's Congress, in January 1975, was heralded as a victory of the "moderates." The Movement to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius had adversely affected production, said the reports. The balance of power between the leftists, led by Mao himself, and the mod-

erate pragmatists, led by Chou En-lai, had tipped in favor of the moderates, they continued. The period of struggle was over, for the moment at least; a new mood of unity had set in. Is there any truth to all this? We cannot claim any inside knowledge of the internal power struggles in the Chinese Communist Party; we do know that our Chinese hosts, many of them Party members, laughed uproariously when we told them of these reports. They insist that the new movement is a new stage, but it is basically a continuation and a deepening of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Movement to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius.

The earlier movements were struggles, violent at times, to expose and depose those leaders taking the road which led to revisionism, and to criticize their ideas.

We destroyed the bourgeois headquarters of Liu Shao-chi and of Lin Piao and crushed their plots to restore capitalism. In the Movement to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius, we have further criticized Lin Piao's counter-revolutionary revisionist line and its important ideological source, the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, and have achieved enormous successes.⁵

The new movement, the Chinese say, is not so much a struggle movement as a movement to deepen people's understanding, so as to prevent backsliding. If the earlier movements were directed at exposing and combatting past errors, the present movement is aimed at preventing future errors. If the earlier movements were intended to restore the Chinese revolution to the right road toward communism, the present movement is intended to stimulate an advance along that road. The current movement can be seen as a unity movement, but not in the sense of unity between the two lines which struggled so fiercely in the earlier movements. Rather, the idea is that in the earlier movements, the "capitalist roaders" were decisively defeated; now unity around the "revolutionary road" is finally possible.

But the new movement is not just a consolidation of the old movements. Observers of both the Movement to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius and the Cultural Revolution were often puzzled at where these revisionist roaders had come from. Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao were described as some sort of poison-

ous weeds which had worked their way into the top ranks of the Party. But there was no explanation of how or why they got there. Were they just peculiarly corrupt individuals? Or did their rise indicate some basic flaw in the society? The new movement tries to answer precisely that question: it is above all an investigation of the social roots of revisionism; and it finds those roots not in individual weakness but in the nature of a socialist society itself. From this analysis emerges a new understanding: how to act to prevent revisionism in the future. The new movement provides the tools with which the Chinese people can themselves recognize and restrict bourgeois ideas and privileges whenever and wherever they first begin to emerge. In this way, they can act to prevent the rise of future Liu Shao-chis and Lin Piaos. And the movement points the way toward the changes in the entire society which are necessary to continue the march toward communism, while at the same time raising the consciousness of the people so as to advance that march.

There must not be the least let-up on our part. Our fight against revisionism is a protracted struggle, not one or two trials of strength. Our task is to work ceaselessly to dig up the soil that breeds revisionism, a task, as Lenin put it, of creating conditions in which it will be impossible for the bourgeoisie to exist or for a new bourgeoisie to arise.⁶

NOTES

1. See Barbara Ehrenreich, "Democracy in China," *Monthly Review* (September 1974).
2. Cited in "Study Well the Theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," editorial in *Renmin Ribao*, February 9, 1975, reprinted in *Peking Review* No. 7 (February 14, 1975).
3. Liang Hsiao and Lu Pin, "New Constitution: Fundamental Charter for Consolidating the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," *Peking Review* No. 28 (July 11, 1975). The phrase in quotes at the end of the passage is from Lenin.
4. Chang Chun-chiao, *Peking Review*, No. 14 (April 4, 1975). Since "abundance" is a relative term, the question can, of course, be asked: At what level of abundance is the transition to full communism possible, and who determines this?
5. "Study Well the Theory. . . ," *loc. cit.*
6. "Study Well the Theory. . . ," *loc. cit.*

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MARXIST THEORIES OF THE CAPITALIST STATE

BY DAVID A. GOLD,
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AND ERIK OLIN WRIGHT

This is a revised version of a paper distributed, and presented orally in abbreviated form, at the San Francisco meetings of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) in December 1974. The widespread interest which the paper aroused, then and subsequently, indicated both to the authors and to us that it should be made available to a larger audience. In proposing publication in MR, one of the authors wrote: "Many authors working within the Marxist tradition are unfamiliar with what we judge to be the most important ongoing research on the capitalist state. To cite one example, in the article 'The Tanzanian State' by Haroub Othman, which you published in the December 1974 issue of MR, the author says that, with the exception of Gramsci and Miliband, Marxists haven't written anything of importance on the state since Lenin. Such a view indicates to us that Othman is not familiar with recent and continuing work of Marxists on the capitalist state. I fear that such unfamiliarity is only too prevalent. It occurred to us that publication in MR would be the best way to reach the largest number and widest variety of interested people." Accordingly, we are publishing it, in two instalments.

The authors are members of the San Francisco *Kapitalistate* Collective, which they explain as follows: "*Kapitalistate: Working Papers on the Capitalist State* is an international journal publishing Marxist research on the state—articles, theoretical notes, analyses of current events, reports on work in progress, book reviews, etc. There are a number of *Kapitalistate* collectives in the United States and other countries. The San Francisco Collective, in addition to participating in editorial, production, and distribution work for the journal, has written an essay on Watergate which appeared in *Kapitalistate* No. 3. Currently the San Francisco collective is studying the role of political parties in the capitalist state. The present paper, while written by three of the members, is part of the work of the group as a whole."—THE EDITORS

This paper will present a summary of some recent developments in Marxist thinking on the capitalist state.* The summary is necessarily brief and schematic since the main purpose is to present ideas and not to discuss them fully or to extend them into a grand synthesis. The ideas and authors discussed are those that have most heavily influenced our thinking and those which we judge to have the greatest potential for guiding future research on the state.

While Marxists have always had much to say about the state, it has only been fairly recently that the creation of a theory of the state has been considered an explicit task. Recent attempts at theorizing have drawn heavily on conceptualizations of the state that were largely implicit in earlier work. Three such implicit perspectives, which may be characterized as the instrumentalist, the structuralist, and the Hegelian-Marxist traditions, have been especially important in guiding current Marxist work on the state.

Much of the recent work has been concerned primarily with explicating these traditions, formulating them into more coherent and systematic theories of the state, and using them to study various specific empirical problems. A number of attempts are being made, however, to go beyond the boundaries defined by these traditional approaches. Some of these are explicit attempts to reconcile, synthesize, and extend the traditional elements; others are beginning to develop new theoretical tools.

This paper will focus first on the traditional approaches. While, as we shall argue below, there is no necessary incompatibility among these various strands of thinking, many Marxists have treated them as quite irreconcilable, and much of the recent work on the state has taken the form of a polemic against one or another alternative perspective. It will therefore be useful, as a point of departure, to lay out the basic logic

* Most of the authors discussed here attempt to develop a theory of the state in advanced capitalist countries. Although their theories can be applied to the analysis of the state in Third World countries, the unique conditions in underdeveloped nations require modifications of the theory which are beyond the scope of this paper.

of these orientations. This discussion will be followed by an explication and brief analysis of some of the recent developments that have attempted to move beyond the more traditional frameworks. We will conclude with some general remarks on theoretical work that remains to be done.

THE TRADITIONS

Very few Marxist works on the state can be considered pure examples of an instrumentalist, structuralist, or Hegelian-Marxist perspective. The logic behind identifying a theoretical perspective as structuralist, instrumentalist, or Hegelian-Marxist is not to imply that every statement which it contains can be neatly pigeonholed into a single category. The point is that in any theory certain parts are systematically organized and integrated into a coherent set of propositions whereas other parts have more the status of ad hoc amendments. What we mean, therefore, by an "instrumentalist theory" of the state is a theory in which the ties between the ruling class and state are systematically examined, while the structural context within which those ties occur remains largely theoretically unorganized. A "structuralist theory," in a complementary way, systematically elaborates how state policy is determined by the contradictions and constraints of the capitalist system, while instrumental manipulation remains a secondary consideration. Finally, a "Hegelian-Marxist theory" places its emphasis on consciousness and ideology, while the link to accumulation and instrumental manipulation stays in the background.

Regardless of which of these traditions is drawn upon most heavily, virtually all Marxist treatments of the state begin with the fundamental observation that the state in capitalist society broadly serves the interests of the capitalist class. Marx and Engels stated this premise in its classic form in *The Communist Manifesto*: "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."

Given this axiom, Marxist theories of the state generally attempt to answer two complementary questions: "Why does the state serve the interests of the capitalist class?" and "How

does the state function to maintain and expand the capitalist system?" But while Marxist works on the state have generally shared these underlying questions, they have dealt with them with varying degrees of sophistication, have formulated them at different levels of abstraction and with different methodological principles, and have given considerably different emphases to one or the other.

Instrumentalist Theories of the State

The instrumentalist perspective provides a fairly straightforward answer to the question, "Why does the state serve the interests of the capitalist class?" It does so because it is controlled by the capitalist class. Ralph Miliband (1969: p. 22)* expresses this position clearly:

In the Marxist scheme, the "ruling class" of capitalist society is that class which owns and controls the means of production and which is able, by virtue of the economic power thus conferred upon it, to use the state as its instrument for the domination of society.

Similarly, Paul Sweezy (1942: p. 243) describes the relationship of economically dominant classes to the state in the following way:

[The class-domination theory of the state] recognizes that classes are the product of historical development and sees in the state an instrument in the hands of the ruling class for enforcing and guaranteeing the stability of the class structure itself.

The research agenda associated with this perspective has focused primarily on studying the nature of the class which rules, the mechanisms which tie this class to the state, and the concrete relationships between state policies and class interests. The method consists of detailed studies of the sociology of the capitalist class, in the first instance simply to show that it exists; studies of the direct personal links between this class and the

* Throughout this article, bibliographic references will be indicated by placing the date of publication and page number in parentheses. The full reference may be found in the bibliography at the end of the article. Numbered notes will also be found at the end of the article.

state apparatus, and links between the capitalist class and intermediary institutions (such as political parties, research organizations, and universities); specific examples of how government policy is shaped; and reinterpretations of episodes from the annals of history.¹

There are, of course, examples of instrumentalist work done at various levels of sophistication. Much of the work of G. William Domhoff, for example, rests almost entirely at the very personal level of showing the social connections between individuals who occupy positions of economic power. Other instrumentalists, most notably Ralph Miliband, have attempted to situate the analysis of personal connections in a more structural context. While most of his analysis still centers on the patterns and consequences of personal and social ties between individuals occupying positions of power in different institutional spheres, Miliband stresses that even if these personal ties were weak or absent—as sometimes happens when social democratic parties come to power—the policies of the state would still be severely constrained by the economic structure in which it operates. Furthermore, he moves away from a voluntaristic version of instrumentalism by stressing the social processes which mold the ideological commitments of the “state elite.”* Nevertheless, in spite of these elements in Miliband’s work, the systematic aspect of his theory of the state remains firmly instrumentalist. In summarizing the general argument

* In one place Miliband (1973: p. 85n) even argues that the state must have a certain degree of autonomy from manipulation by the ruling class: “A simple illustration of the point is the common interpretation of the most familiar of all the Marxist formulations on the state, that which is to be found in *The Communist Manifesto*, where Marx and Engels assert that ‘the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.’ This has regularly been taken to mean not only that the state acts *on behalf* of the dominant class . . . but that it acts *at the behest* of that class which is an altogether different assertion and, as I would argue, a vulgar deformation of the thought of Marx and Engels. . . . [T]he notion of common affairs assumes the existence of particular ones; and the notion of the whole bourgeoisie implies the existence of separate elements which make up that whole. This being the case, there is an obvious need for an institution of the kind they refer to, namely the state; and the state *cannot* meet this need without enjoying a certain degree of autonomy. In other words, the notion of autonomy is embedded in the definition itself, is an intrinsic part of it.”

of his major work on the state, Miliband (1969: p. 146) writes:

What is wrong with pluralist-democratic theory is not its insistence on the fact of competition [over state policies] but its claim (very often its implicit assumption) that the major organized "interests" in these societies, and notably capital and labor, compete on more or less equal terms, and that none of them is therefore able to achieve a decisive and permanent advantage in the process of competition. . . . In previous chapters it was shown that business, particularly large-scale business, did enjoy such an advantage *inside* the state system, by virtue of the composition and ideological inclinations of the state elite. In this chapter we shall see that business enjoys a massive superiority *outside* the state system as well, in terms of immensely stronger pressures which, as compared with labor and any other interest, it is able to exercise in the pursuit of its purposes.

The functioning of the state is thus still fundamentally understood in terms of the instrumental exercise of power by people in strategic positions, either directly through the manipulation of state policies or indirectly through the exercise of pressure on the state.

The instrumentalist perspective has made a number of important contributions to a Marxist theory of the state.² It has generated much research that has helped to build a sociology of the capitalist class. In particular, it has contributed to piercing the veil of legitimacy that hangs over many of the specific institutions that systematically link the capitalist class to the state. Instrumentalist research has also been of great importance in bringing to light the conflicts that exist within the capitalist class. Such work has made a considerable contribution toward an understanding of the local basis of capitalist class power and of the interrelationships between local, regional, and national institutions of the capitalist class.

Despite these successes, the instrumentalist perspective has some major deficiencies which make it unsuitable as a general theory of the capitalist state. Much of the empirical work represents an explicit attempt to confront the conclusions of pluralists. While largely successful in such confrontations, this work has failed to transcend the framework that the pluralists use. The emphasis, especially in American power-structure re-

search, has been on social and political groupings rather than classes defined by their relationship to the means of production.³ Furthermore, like most pluralists, instrumentalist writers tend to see social causes simply in term of the strategies and actions of individuals and groups. While in pluralist theory there are many such groups, all working for their interests and influencing the state, in instrumentalist theory there is only one overwhelmingly dominant group. But the logic of social causation remains the same. With rare exceptions, there is no systematic analysis of how the strategies and actions of ruling-class groups are limited by impersonal, structural causes. At times the exercise of power and the formation of state policy seem to be reduced to a kind of voluntarism on the part of powerful people.

In a slightly different vein, there are numerous examples of state activity that appear not to fit even the sophisticated variants of instrumentalism. On a number of occasions, reforms undertaken by the state were opposed by large segments of the business community, as, for example, during the New Deal. Even when such reforms are ultimately co-optive, to treat all reforms as the result of an instrumentalist use of the state by capitalists is to deny the possibility of struggle over reform. There are also state policies which cannot easily be explained by direct corporate initiatives but which may come from within the state itself. These tend to speak to broad, rather than specific, capitalist interests. To explain these fully there is the need for a logic of the capitalist state, both in terms of its relations to civil society and in terms of its internal operations.

Finally, there are important realms of state-related activity which are clearly not manipulated by specific capitalists or coalitions, such as culture, ideology, and legitimacy. These possess a degree of autonomy which tends to place them outside the realm of simple manipulation (see Williams, 1973).

Structuralist Theories of the State

The structuralist analysis of the state categorically rejects the notion that the state can be understood as a simple "instrument" in the hands of a ruling class. In a critique of the work of Miliband, Nicos Poulantzas, a French structuralist Marxist, wrote that

the *direct* participation of members of the capitalist class in the state apparatus and in the government, even where it exists, is not the important side of the matter. The relation between the bourgeois class and the state is an *objective relation*. This means that if the *function* of the state in a determinate social formation and the *interests* of the dominant class in this formation coincide, it is by reason of the system itself: the direct participation of members of the ruling class in the state apparatus is not the *cause* but the *effect*, and moreover a chance and contingent one, of this objective coincidence. (1969: p. 245)

The fundamental thesis of the structuralist perspective is that the functions of the state are broadly determined by the structures of the society rather than by the people who occupy positions of state power.* Therefore, the starting point of the structuralist analysis is generally an examination of the class structure in the society, particularly the contradictions rooted in the economy. Structuralists then analyze how the state attempts to neutralize or displace these various contradictions. The structuralist theory of the state thus attempts to unravel the functions the state must perform in order to reproduce capitalist society as a whole. These functions determine the specific policies and organization of the state. According to the structuralists, the concrete ways in which the state meets the functions vary with such factors as the level of capitalist development and the forms of class struggle.

The most elaborate structuralist-Marxist model of the state is presented by Poulantzas, especially in his book *Political Power and Social Classes*.⁴ Following Marx, Poulantzas argues that in capitalist society the crucial economic contradiction centers on the ever-increasing social character of production on the one hand and the continuing private appropriation of the surplus

* The concept of structure is constantly used by structuralist writers, but rarely explicitly defined. Structure does *not* refer to the concrete social institutions that make up a society, but rather to the systematic functional interrelationships among these institutions. Maurice Godelier (1972: p. 336) stated it this way: "Structures should not be confused with visible 'social relations' but constitute a level of reality invisible but present behind the visible social relations." The analysis of the structure of a capitalist society is thus the analysis of the functional relationship of various institutions to the process of surplus-value production and appropriation.

product on the other. This contradiction poses two complementary threats to the reproduction of the system as a whole. On the one hand, the contradiction between social production and private appropriation poses the threat of *working-class unity*, which becomes potentially stronger as the social nature of the production process deepens, and which eventually contains the possibility of the destruction of capitalism itself. On the other hand, this contradiction poses the threat of *capitalist-class disunity*, fostered by the continued private and competitive appropriation of surplus. This lack of unity threatens the ability of the capitalist class to contain struggles by the working class. The state plays the decisive role of mediating this contradiction, of providing the "factor of unity in a social formation" operating to counteract the combined threats of working-class unity and capitalist disunity.

Poulantzas analyzes this function of the capitalist state, the promotion of unity in a social formation, in terms of its impact on the working class and the capitalist class:

(a) *The working class*. The state serves the function of atomizing the working class, of disintegrating its political unity through the transformation of workers into individualized citizens while at the same time representing itself as the integrated, universal interest of the society as a whole. This is accomplished through the institutions of bourgeois democracy and justice, which create the appearance of equality, fair play, due process, etc., and through various kinds of economic concessions made by the state which help to transform the political struggle of the working class as a whole into narrow, economistic interest-group struggles of particular segments of the working class.

(b) *The capitalist class*. The state serves the function of guaranteeing the long-run interests of the capitalist class as a whole. Poulantzas stresses that the bourgeoisie cannot be considered a homogeneous ruling class with an unambiguous class-wide interest. Rather, the bourgeoisie is a highly fractionated class, with divergent interests at the political as well as economic levels. These diverse class fractions are organized into what Poulantzas (following Gramsci) calls the "power bloc," a political coalition under the domination of a particular hegemonic fraction. Such a power bloc, however, is always pre-

carious, possessing only limited ability to enforce the concessions to the working class which are so necessary for the stability of the long-term interests of the capitalist class as a whole. The only way that these interests can be protected, therefore, is through the relative autonomy of the state, through a state structure which is capable of transcending the parochial, individualized interests of specific capitalists and capitalist class fractions. A state which was the tool of one capitalist grouping would be utterly incapable of accomplishing this.*

This relative autonomy, however, is not an invariant feature of the capitalist state. Particular capitalist states will be more or less autonomous depending upon the degree of internal divisiveness, the contradictions within the various classes and fractions which constitute the power bloc, and upon the intensity of class struggle between the working class and the capitalist class as a whole.

The absence of any real discussion of how social mechanisms regulate these various functional relationships seriously weakens Poulantzas's structural analysis. Although there is a fairly rich discussion of *how* the relative autonomy of the state protects the class interests of the dominant class, and of the functional *necessity* for such a state structure, there is no explanation of the social mechanisms which guarantee that the state will in fact function in this way.

One obvious way out of this difficulty would be to employ some notion of "class consciousness." It could then be argued that class-conscious capitalists guide the development of state structures which accomplish the needed functional patterns. Structuralist writers, however, have almost completely rejected the usefulness of consciousness as an explanation for any aspect of social structure. They insist that class consciousness is a catch-all residual category used by Marxists to "explain" things that more systematic theory fails to resolve. Consciousness, the structuralists argue, explains nothing; the point is to explain

* By "relative autonomy" the structuralists mean relative autonomy from manipulation by specific capitalist-class members or interests. They do not mean that the state is autonomous in any real sense from the structural requirements of the economy.

consciousness through an analysis of the dynamics of society. But if class consciousness doesn't provide a way out, structuralists have not advanced any more suitable way to deal with these theoretical difficulties. While the instrumentalist perspective has tended toward voluntarism to explain state activities, the structuralists have almost entirely eliminated conscious action from their analysis.

As in the other perspectives on the state, there are examples of structuralist writings that exhibit differing degrees of theoretical sophistication. Much Marxian political economy has at least implicitly held the view that state policies respond almost exclusively to economic contradictions. This view of the state might be termed "economic structuralism." Other state activities and non-economic influences on economic policy are treated secondarily, or not at all. The state is perceived as having little or no autonomy, and its non-economic activities are seen as directly derived from the logic of accumulation.

To be both accurate and fair, it must be pointed out that in such economic structuralism there is generally no attempt to develop a full theory of the state. The state is incorporated in an analysis that has its main purpose elsewhere. Nevertheless, we feel that the issues discussed in these works cannot be successfully resolved without a more complete view of the state.

Baran and Sweezy (1966) present one of the most important examples of such economic structuralism. They discuss the state primarily in terms of how it aids in the surplus absorption process. State activities are defined by a structural contradiction in the economy, but at the same time there is an attempt to integrate elements of an instrumentalist analysis. The particularistic actions of capitalist groups are seen as being in conflict with the need for the state to act for the class as a whole, so that the actual ways in which the state attempts to absorb the rising surplus are a result of an interaction between the structural needs and the particular interests. But the economic contradictions dominate the analysis and the instrumentalist evidence is interpreted within that framework. Other contradictions, such as those arising from ideology or class con-

flicts, play a very minor role. The thrust of the work, then, is basically that of economic structuralism.*

Hegelian-Marxist Perspectives

There are many Marxists who derive their primary inspiration from Hegel and the early writings of Marx and Engels, and more recently from Lukacs and writers such as Habermas, Marcuse, and others in the tradition of the Frankfurt School (or what is sometimes called "critical theory"). Instead of focusing on the *why* and *how* of the relationship between the state and the capitalist class, the Hegelian-Marxist perspective operates at a somewhat higher level of abstraction. The key question appears to be, "*What* is the state?" The basic answer is that the state is a mystification, a concrete institution which serves the interests of the dominant class, but which seeks to portray itself as serving the nation as a whole, thereby obscuring the basic lines of class antagonism. Thus, the state represents a universality, but a false one, an "illusory community."⁵

Most of the writings in this perspective take off from this point and examine how the mystification occurs. They have placed great emphasis on ideology, consciousness, legitimacy, and the mediating role of institutions and ideas, thereby contributing significantly to current thinking on politics. However, the Hegelian-Marxist perspective has not developed a coherent theory of the state or even a well-defined logic of the relation between state and society. There is little analysis of specific state actions or concrete politics in these writings, so it is difficult to connect these ideas with an empirical reality. Perhaps because of this, the key notions of false consciousness and false

* There are other examples of economic structuralism. Ackerman and MacEwan (1972) and MacEwan (1972) treat the state as the enforcer of the rules of the game of the accumulation process but do not reflect on the state's ability to alter or influence those rules. Boddy and Crotty (1974) develop a class-conflict theory of macro-economic policy, but the class conflict being posited is only at the level of the wage bargain, not at the level of the state. In this analysis, the state is the arena for choosing a strategy for the capitalist class. Mattick (1969) and Yaffe (1973) consider that state intervention ultimately worsens the tendencies toward crises that are endemic to the capitalist accumulation process. In their work, the state is seen as having even less potential for mediating contradictions than in other versions of economic structuralism.

ideology remain incomplete; it is unclear how and why they remain false when they are being continually confronted with the reality of daily life under capitalism.

Antonio Gramsci, who is difficult to classify within any one perspective, can be considered as one thinker emerging from the Hegelian-Marxist tradition who avoids the pitfalls of over-abstractness. Gramsci analyzed capitalist ideology both theoretically and empirically, studying cultural changes in Italy and America induced by changes in production relations. His theory of civil society and the state, and his concrete discussions of fascism and the collapse of political parties in interwar Europe are examples of a Marxist analysis that is developed in both the political-economic and ideological dimensions. "The Southern Question," Gramsci's essay on the ideological and political factors that produce alliances between classes stands as a Marxist classic. Through his examination of the groups that could possibly support the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie of northern Italy, Gramsci developed the notion of "hegemony," a key concept in the analysis of capitalist domination through the state. His work has been an important influence on Poulantzas, among others, who has attempted to incorporate such political phenomena into a more systematic theory of capitalist society.

(To be continued)

NOTES

1. For examples of each type of work see: Domhoff (1967); Miliband (1969) and Nichols (1972); Domhoff (1970, Part 2); Kolko (1963) and Weinstein (1968). The literature on financial-interest groups has also contributed to the formation of an empirical picture of the capitalist class in the United States. See Menshikov (1969). For valuable instrumental analyses of U.S. foreign policy, see Joyce and Gabriel Kolko (1972) and Eakins (1969).
2. The remainder of this section draws heavily on Mollenkopf (1975).
3. For the development of such a criticism, see Balbus (1971). For an exchange between an instrumentalist and a structuralist that delves into many of the key issues, see Poulantzas (1969), Miliband (1970, 1973). The empirical analysis of Menshikov (1969) builds on production categories.
4. Another, less complete, example is Althusser (1971). For analyses of Poulantzas's theoretical framework, see Wright and Perrone (1973), Miliband (1973), and Bridges (1974).

5. For examples of works in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition which include some discussion of the state, see Marcuse (1969), Ollman (1971) and Avineri (1968).

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BOOKS

PAST NATIONAL STRUGGLES AND PRESENT SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN VIETNAM

By Tran Van Dinh

Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam, by Nguyen Khac Vien; edited and with a preface by David Marr and Jayne Werner; translated by Linda Yarr, Jayne Werner and Tran Tuong Nhu. The Indochina Resource Center, Berkeley, Calif., 1974. 169 pp. \$2.65.

The Confucian scholar on the execution block repeated, "I die, but I have fulfilled my duty." The militant communist facing a firing squad said, "I die, but you will be defeated," and thought, "When the contradictions come to a head, we will be there and we will win."

—Nguyen Khac Vien

Since book publishing in the United States is—with few exceptions—part of the "consciousness industry," it is geared to a market which has been prepared by TV, movies, newspapers. And like moviemaking, it generally seeks a Three M (Myth, Magic,

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Monotony)^{1*} effect. An analysis of many of the hundreds of books on Vietnam by commercial publishers in recent years confirms this. Authors who attempt to uncover the deep roots of the war are accused of being "doctrinaire," as if doctrine has nothing to do with issues as fundamental as imperialism, capitalism, socialism, war, and peace. When some Vietnamese living in this country (myself included) approached big publishers, we were for the most part advised to write about "unique Vietnamese culture, avoiding controversial politics."² One editor even had the audacity to suggest that I write on "Vietnamese Solitude" in the manner of Octavio Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude*. When told that there has been no place for solitude for any Vietnamese in the last 4,000 years, the editor commented: "You are not an authentic Vietnamese; you have a too materialistic attitude to existence."

Naturally, I have nothing against culture, if by culture one means "the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence."³ But to the Kung-Fu-conditioned American audience, culture—outside that of the West—is nurtured in "cosmic mystification" and reveals itself in incoherent utterances by jet-imported gurus from the misty Himalayas, by Karate-Messiahs from South Korea, or restructured shamans from the "Tristes Tropiques." Since the Christmas 1972 B-52 carpet-bombing of Hanoi and the 1973 Paris Agreement, Washington, with the eager help of the mass media, has developed another convenient myth: the Vietnam war is over, an "honorable peace" has been attained, and what the United States is doing now is simply to carry out "residual moral obligations."⁴ This cosmetic illusion is shattered by the realities of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese casualties, of billions of dollars of U.S. aid to the warlord clique of Saigon, which lead some resilient antiwar groups into attempting a revival of the Vietnam war debate. Hence the most welcome publication by the Indochina Resource Center of *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*.

This volume is a collection of six essays written originally in French by Dr. Nguyen Khac Vien, a 61-year-old, Western-trained physician and one of Hanoi's leading scholars. The general theme of this thoughtfully illustrated, carefully edited, and masterfully translated book deals with the relationship between past Viet-

* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

namese national struggles and the present socialist revolution, between patriotism and socialism, between the two-pronged historical mission of the Vietnamese people, that of *Dung Nuoc* (Building a Nation, or Production) and *Cuu Nuoc* (Saving a Nation, or Fighting). The essays not only give foreign readers some "insight into the Vietnamese *Weltanschauung*" (p. 2), as the editors hope, but also provide solid explanations of what Henry Kissinger described as the "Vietnamese Communists' ability to supply an answer to the question of the nature and foundations of political authority."⁵ That "ability" results in the emergence of a particular leadership for revolution and the selection of a particular system for development. In Vietnam, since 1930, the leadership for revolution is the Indochinese Communist Party (renamed Vietnam Workers Party in 1951), and the system of development is socialism, which follows "a policy defined by Marxist analysis." (p. 150) Vien, who "had the opportunity to live in a feudal society for a long time, and later in an industrialized capitalist country [France] and [is] now actively participating in the building of a new Vietnam" (p. 144), clarifies that emergence and that selection by pointing out the basic weaknesses of the bourgeoisie:

Bourgeois movements are led primarily by those who come from intellectual and business circles. They lack a popular base in the mines, plantations, factories, to say nothing of peasantry. The apologists of such movements, trained in Western-style universities, are undoubtedly capable of drawing up beautiful plans, writing constitutions, and making speeches at the United Nations; they are however totally incapable of organizing a strike, working for years on end in mines or on plantations, waging guerrilla warfare for decades, plodding through the mud of rice paddies. (pp. 138-139)

Vien further tells us that "the first directive issued by the Communist Party in Vietnam shortly after its founding [in 1930] ordered its political activists to work in the mines, become rickshaw pullers, and to live and work among the peasants—to build a solid base of support among the people. Bourgeois politicians on the other hand, spent their time primarily in contacting other politicians, journalists, and foreign governments." (p. 139)

The emergence of the Communist Party to lead the revolution and the selection of socialism as a system of development were not the products of intellectual curiosity but of a concrete analysis by Vietnamese revolutionaries of the subjective and objective con-

ditions of twentieth-century Vietnam and of the Vietnamese tradition. To avoid misinterpretation, it is important to specify right away what Vien means by tradition. It is not simply, as defined by the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, an unquestioned "handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, etc.," but a precise cultural pattern "the significance of which changes when a people undertakes an armed struggle or even a political struggle."⁶ Understood this way, tradition, instead of constituting an obstacle to change, provides a continuity, a meaning, a logic for change. In the case of Vietnam, it helps to understand what Professor Franz Schurmann has called "the unrelenting determination and the simple humanism of revolutionary Vietnam."⁷ That tradition, as Vien reveals to us, is the "peasants' struggle for their rights [which] weaves in and out of Vietnamese history like a piece of red thread" (p. 20), the mobilization of the entire peasantry to build water networks or "to fight the huge Chinese feudal armies," the organization of peasants' armies and their experienced use of guerrilla tactics.⁸ One of the main sources of that tradition is described and analyzed in a most perceptive, original, and timely essay, "Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam." (pp. 15-52)

The issue of Confucianism and Marxism has become a topic of much international interest since the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The Chinese Communist leadership denounces Confucius and attacks Confucianism in its totality. This is not an indirect way to criticize Premier Chou En-lai, as some Western China-watchers want us to believe. It is a fundamental issue. Dr. Fung Yu-lan, the 80-year-old, world-renowned philosopher, much admired in this country, recently declared that "the Confucian doctrine . . . has been a central part of the struggle between the proletarian and bourgeois classes and their two lines in the sphere of ideology." He admitted that "my present criticism of Confucius is at the same time a criticism of my own thought and action."⁹ Of course, the influence of Confucius in Vietnam was not as profound as in China, the land of his birth, not only because, as the editors observe, "Vietnam has never accepted the old gentleman and his disciples quite as unequivocally as did China" (p. xv), but also and especially because in Vietnam Confucianism has been constantly challenged by two other religions and/or philosophies: Buddhism and Taoism, which Vien mentions in passing.

While Fung Yu-lan used the statement "Whoever consoles the slave instead of rousing him to rise up against slavery is aid-

ing the slaveowner"¹⁰ to condemn Confucius, Vien argues that Confucianism, which "taught that man is above all a social being, bound by social obligations" (p. 26), is considered by Vietnamese Marxists as "part of their national heritage to be assimilated by the new society." (p. 20) He affirms that the "Confucian man makes the transition from a traditional society to a socialist one" (p. 52), arriving at this conclusion by noting that the Confucian is "never actually hostile to the principle of collective discipline (as is the bourgeois intellectual) since he always sees social discipline as an indispensable part of the development of his own personality." (p. 47) Earlier, Vien observes that "on the level of politics, Confucianism was essentially conservative [and] ignored questions of law and social examination, systematically refusing any change" (p. 35), and that "the ritualism of Confucian doctrine, together with this social immobility, gave rise to an acute sensitivity to social hierarchy." (p. 38) It is hard for me to see how the Confucian man can make "the transition from a traditional society to a socialist one," when he "systematically refuses any change," when "on the level of politics he ignores social examination," and when, according to Vien himself, "ideological liberation of the great majority of people is the *sine qua non* of development." (p. 132) How can a transition from Confucianism, which "was tantamount to the complete restoration of the old order of slave society,"¹¹ to socialism, which is a new, dynamic, liberating revolutionary social order, be effected?

Coming as I do from the same type of Confucian family as Vien,¹² holding in high respect the Confucian scholars who resisted foreign aggressions, but knowing also that there were Confucians who betrayed the nation and served the French,¹³ I do not totally agree with his view. I am inclined rather to think that if some Confucians (not all) could play a role as "the transition from a traditional society to a socialist one," it is mainly because their orthodox Confucianism has been diluted in the original "spirit of solidarity, mutual aid of the communes,"¹⁴ during the formative years of the Vietnamese nation, by that persistent collectivism which animated Vietnamese society long before the impact of Confucianism. That collectivism, as all Vietnamese know, can be detected in numerous legends, popular songs, sayings. Moreover, as I said earlier, Confucianism has never enjoyed an unchallenged position of supremacy in Vietnamese thought. The *Lich Su Vietnam* (History of Vietnam) noted:

Confucianism has penetrated deeply in our country since the Han dynasty; yet its basic doctrine has failed to take deep roots, to shake off the independence consciousness of our people. All religions, all philosophical currents, coming from various directions, which were propagated in our land, have been harmonized into one another and all have some negative aspects as well as some definite positive ones. The most striking characteristic is that no religion has succeeded in creating fanaticism which can be the most dangerous seed of national division. Religious tolerance is a national virtue in our tradition.¹⁵

Ever since 1169, under the Ly dynasty, *Tam Giao* [Three Religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism] competitive examinations to recruit mandarins have been organized. This is evidence that Confucianism has never occupied an unchallenged place in the intellectual life of Vietnam. In *Vietnam: A Historical Sketch*, it is recognized, for example, that "Buddhism left a lasting imprint on the Vietnamese soul." In the same book, it is also noted that "in the thirteenth century, the ideological struggle between Buddhism and Confucianism became increasingly acute, a struggle which reflected the antagonism opposing the nobles, owners of great domains, to the fast-growing class of peasant-owners of popular origin,"¹⁶ in other words, a class struggle. In any class struggle, as modern history has shown us, the residual traits of the defeated class continue to subvert the victorious one for a long time. This is not to say that Buddhism was driven out of the Vietnamese scene after the thirteenth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "many Confucian scholars entered the (Buddhist) order and one sees appear here and there theories on the common origins and common essence of the Three Religions. It can be argued that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a particular syncretism was effected which formed the present popular religion."¹⁷ Vien says that Buddhism, "affirmed the vanity (and even the unreality) of the things of this world, preached renunciation, and directed people's minds towards supernatural hopes." (p. 26) Yet, *Vietnam: A Historical Sketch* related an anecdote familiar to all Vietnamese historians, about King Tran Thai Ton (reigned from 1225 to 1258). One day he asked the Buddhist Great Master Truc Lam's opinion of his intention to retire to the mountains to seek Buddha's teachings. The Great Master advised: "No Buddha is to be found in these mountains. He is in our heart. When the heart is at peace and lucid, Buddha is there. . . . Since you are King, the will of

the kingdom must also be your will, the heart of the kingdom must be your heart. The whole kingdom is waiting for you to return, how can you refuse?"¹⁸

Obviously the Buddhist Great Master did not counsel renunciation. Vien's definition of Buddhism certainly does not agree with that of other Vietnamese scholars. One of them, Dr. Ton That Thien, chairman of the department of social sciences, Van Hanh (Buddhist) University in Saigon, wrote:

Buddhism has been usually presented to Westerners, even at the university level, as a religion of suffering, renunciation, annihilation, in a word, as a negative religion rejecting and obstructing progress. Yet, it deserves none of those epithets. . . . The real Buddhism, that which is faithful to the message of Buddha, is an assertion of the supremacy of human freedom against attempts, overt or covert, to corrupt man and hold him in bondage. . . . When one has read the analysis of the present scientific and technological society by such specialists on the subject as Toffler, one must admit that not only the Buddha is right, but that he has put his finger on a truth which has remained a truth for twenty-five centuries.¹⁹

The superiority of socialism over capitalism in its practical aspect lies in its deep concern for the masses, a characteristic of Buddhism. Continuing the tradition of Buddhist Emperor Asoka of India (third century B.C.), many Vietnamese Buddhist kings such as Ly Thanh Ton (reigned from 1054 to 1072) built public granaries to stock and distribute foods to people in time of bad harvest. In my opinion, the concepts of a propertyless and classless society (which made Buddhism such a threat to caste-ridden Hindu society), reflected in the community of *sanghas* (Buddhist monks), are more transitional to socialism than the cold elitism of Confucianism. I am sure Vien is aware of the debates on the relationship between Buddhism and Marxism in several Asian leftist movements, especially in Burma.

In recent years, the Vietnamese Buddhists have played no small part in the struggle against war and dictatorship, a struggle which is continuing at this writing in the cities of South Vietnam. In a well-documented article published this year in Hanoi, Nguyen Ngoc Bich, a Marxist, wrote: "The birth of Buddhism, in the last analysis, is the reflection of a social situation in which the sufferings from oppression and exploitation originated in the division of society into classes, and from the class struggle. These

sufferings weighed heavily on the condition of the masses.”²⁰ As to the present state of Buddhism, he remarked: “Overcoming all difficulties, the patriotic elements of the Buddhist church have affirmed in a clear-cut way that the protection and the implementation of the Dharma cannot be separated from the struggle to restore national self-determination and independence. This has been a fine tradition of Vietnamese Buddhism.”²¹ This fine tradition is materialized in real life: two Buddhist monks are on the Central Committee of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, and another famed Buddhist monk, Thich Don Hau, is vice-chairman of the Alliance for Peace and Democracy, formed after the 1968 Tet Offensive.²²

Vien also dismisses the contribution of Taoism, which he sees as an obstacle “to distinguishing between science and magic.” (p. 43) Well-known scientists such as Joseph Needham would disagree on this. Needham believes that “science and magic are in the earliest stages indistinguishable,” and that “the Taoist philosophers with their emphasis on Nature were bound in due course to pass from the observational to the experimental.”²³ He quotes Dr. Fung Yu-lan as having observed that “Taoism is the only system of mysticism which the world has ever seen which was not profoundly anti-scientific.”²⁴ The Taoists’ dialectics, their rebellious attitude toward the status quo, their sharp attacks on Confucian conformism, are more conducive to revolutionary thoughts and to transition to socialism than the rigidity and dogmatism of Confucianism.

If I have devoted a great deal of space to the essay “Marxism and Confucianism in Vietnam,” it is because, on the theoretical level, it is most important. My differences with Vien, however, are on interpretations and not on objectives. Like him, I believe that “any attempt to revive Confucianism,” and for that matter any other religion or philosophy which stands in the way of the Vietnamese march toward socialism, is not only “useless” (p. 52) but futile and reactionary as well. However, it is not at all impossible that in the distant future—when, as we say, “the seas are tranquil and the rivers are calm,” when a united Vietnam consolidates the fruits of its revolution and heals the wounds of war—the issues of bureaucracy, elitism, bourgeois deviations (all of more or less Confucian origin) can be brought forth for national debate as they are in China today.

Another lengthy article, “Water, Rice and Men,” provides readers with valuable information on the ideology and methodol-

ogy followed by Vietnamese revolutionaries and peasants in fighting and taming floods and droughts, growing and preserving rice, living in close communication with Vietnamese men and women at the most meaningful level of society: the villages and hamlets. Through this brilliant study of the modern social history of Hung Yen (a province in North Vietnam, known in pre-revolutionary Vietnam for its large number of beggars) shines the author's profound humanism, his disciplined mind, his deep social commitment, his sense of poetry and humor. To gather material for this essay, he visited Hung Yen "on a sunny day, under an almost Mediterranean blue sky, a light breeze announcing the cold of the winter ripples the yellow ears of the ripening rice." (p. 75) He talked to people of all walks of life from all levels of administrative responsibilities, and he visited a museum:

"Today, when you go to the province museum to see the first weapons the guerrillas used, their mimeograph machine for printing leaflets, the guitar which entertained them during their leisure moments (made from an empty biscuit tin thrown away by the French troops), you are tempted to smile at these things which seem more like toys than weapons." (p. 112) Perhaps one of the characteristics of the Vietnamese people's humanism is their ability to make toys out of weapons and weapons out of toys.

The transformations Vien witnessed in Hung Yen he also saw in his native village. He describes them in a moving short essay, "The Old Banyan Tree":

The roads have been widened and there are wheelbarrows and carts on them now. The number of bicycles has multiplied. Not everyone has his own newspaper, but the village cooperative has a book collection and subscribes to reviews and journals. The wind no longer plays its weird music in the branches of the old banyan, but on moonlit nights you can hear young people singing. Heated discussions on who will get the head of the chicken no longer occur, but discussions do take place on how to transplant rice, make plows, dig irrigation canals, and set up a day-care center. And today, just try to force a young girl to marry a man she does not love! (pp. 168-169)

Vien displays the same qualities of rigorous analysis and candid reflections in other essays on Third World revolutions ("The Vietnamese Experience and the Third World"), on the 1973 Paris Agreement ("Some Reflections on Ending the War"), on strategy and tactics of people's wars ("The Judo Lesson"), on

"The American War." In all these pieces, a distinct optimism, common to all Vietnamese revolutionaries, emerges. He feels that out of this war and the "great loss of American imperialism . . ." a "new starting point for America can be found . . . : for scientists, workers, students, men and women of peace and progress who will mark out and be the true America, a fresh starting point from which to think and rebuild a future no longer in terms of domination, but of justice and human solidarity." (pp. 5-6)

I expect, as the editors of this book do, that "the writings contained in this slim book have the potential of raising discussions on Vietnam in the United States to a new level." (p. x) For the old level of discussion has been emptied and confused both by those who only talked about revolution outside of social context and by those who only talked about tradition outside of struggle. The former engaged in rhetorical mystification and the latter in "cosmic subjectivism" (Vien's own words). Both ignored the profound humanistic character of the Vietnamese revolution, the Yin-Yang relationship between tradition and revolution, and therefore missed the very essence of Vietnamese history. Above all, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam* has brought us to one of the most fundamental insights about social science, namely, to quote Marx, that "all science would be superstition if outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided." *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam* is anything but superstition. This is no small accomplishment but rather a great contribution.

NOTES

1. Bosley Crowther: "Magic, Myth, and Monotony: A Measure of the Role of Movies in a Free Society," in *Mass Media in a Free Society*, Warren K. Agee, ed. (Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas Press, 1966), p. 81.
2. There are a few exceptions, such as Ngo Vinh Long, author of *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants under the French* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973).
3. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p. 233.
4. Henry Kissinger, at the Senate hearings for his confirmation as Secretary of State, September 1973.
5. Henry Kissinger, "The Vietnam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs* (January 1969).
6. Fanon, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
7. Franz Schurmann, "Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam," a review, *Indochina Chronicle* (July 1974).
8. See my "Vietnam People's Army," *Indochina Chronicle* (February 1974).

9. Fung, Yu-lan, "Changes in my Understanding of Confucius," *China Reconstructs* (August 1974).
10. *Ibid.*
11. Feuerbach, as quoted in Lenin's "Collapse of the Third International," quoted by Fung Yu-lan, *op. cit.*
12. See my "Memory of Tet," *The Progressive* (February 1974).
13. David Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 66.
14. *Lich Su Vietnam* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing, 1972).
15. *Ibid.*, p. 108 (my translation).
16. *Vietnam: A Historical Sketch*, (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1974), p. 53.
17. Le Thanh Khoi, *Histoire du Vietnam* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1955), pp. 279-282.
18. *Vietnam: A Historical Sketch*, p. 50.
19. Ton That Thien, "The Supremacy of Human Freedom or Buddhism and the Scientific and Technological Revolution," keynote address at the students' graduation ceremony, Van Hanh University, Saigon, February 1, 1972.
20. Nguyen Ngoc Bich, "Cuoc Dau Tranh Cach Menh Cua Dan Toc Va Nhung Ngnoi Tri Thuc Phat Tu Yeu Nuoc Trong Cac Do Thi Mien Nam," (National Revolutionary Struggle and the Patriotic Buddhist Intellectuals in the Cities of South Vietnam), *Triet Hoc* (No. 5, 1974).
21. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
22. See my "Thich Don Hau: Profile of a Buddhist Leader," *Christian Century* (September 18, 1968).
23. Joseph Needham and Wang Ling, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 34.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

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INDONESIA TODAY

By Cheryl Payer

Repression and Exploitation in Indonesia, edited by the British Indonesia Committee. London: Spokesman Books, 1974.

On October 1, 1965, six top-ranking generals of the Indonesian Army were killed in an abortive coup attempt by dissident junior officers. The attempt climaxed several years of rising tension between the army and the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) over the direction of Indonesian political and economic development. The surviving army leadership quickly labeled the coup attempt as the work of the PKI, and although the extent of Communist involvement in the event is still in dispute, there can be no doubt as to the importance of October 1965 as a tragic turning point in the modern history of Indonesia.

Sukarno, who had headed the government of Indonesia since it won independence from the Dutch in 1949, was eased out of power, first in fact and then in name, by the military over the course of the eighteen months following the events of October 1965. General Suharto, who put down the attempted coup, replaced him in the No. 1 spot. Suharto turned over the manage-

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Repression and Exploitation is available in the United States from TAPOL — the U.S. Campaign for the Release of Indonesian Political Prisoners, P.O. No. 609, Montclair, N.J. 07042. The price is \$2.50, including postage. Please make checks payable to TAPOL-USA.

ment of the economy to Western-trained Indonesian economists and their AID, World Bank, and Ford Foundation mentors; they in turn opened the country wide to foreign companies who have been shipping the nation's mineral and agricultural wealth out of the country as rapidly as it can be extracted.

The political groups which would have opposed this arrangement have been outlawed and destroyed; the individuals who led and belonged to such groups have been killed, imprisoned, or effectively silenced by the fear of death or imprisonment. Hundreds of thousands of Indonesians—estimates range up to one million—were massacred in cold blood during the months following October 1965 (the coup attempt itself was put down without bloodshed). The complete lack of reliable figures is chilling in itself. In addition to these, many tens of thousands of men and women (here again it is impossible to cite accurate figures) have been held without prospect of release or even of trial, on the mere accusation of possible involvement in the events of October 1, 1965.

And yet many people in the Western world remain ignorant or indifferent to these tragic facts—a situation which may well be attributable to the racist assumption that Asian lives are cheap. All that many white people know about the events of October 1965 is the officially inspired propaganda that it marked the beginning of the end for the “megalomaniac” Sukarno and his “irrational” policies, and the beginning of the “economic miracle” of an Indonesia now under the rule of the generals, docilely delivering its raw materials to eager Western customers.

Those who are more interested in human life than in profit will find *Repression and Exploitation in Indonesia*, produced by the British Indonesia Committee, to be a valuable collection of articles on the society which has developed (or underdeveloped) in the ten years since October 1965. Six signed articles, each exploring a major facet of the current Indonesian reality, form the major part of the book.

John Taylor's article on “The Economic Strategy of the New Order” is probably the best I have seen on its subject. In 15 pages he gives a capsule summary of Dutch rule in Indonesia and a balanced assessment of Sukarno's aspirations and failures, as well as making all the important points about the post-1965 economic policies. He concludes that “the military government's economic strategy *can* produce high levels of ‘growth’ and ‘development’—but for whom? It is only when we pose this question of the effects

of military planning on the masses that the utter and abject failures of 'development' become concretely clear."

Jan Pluvier's contribution on "The Military Dictatorship in Indonesia" is unfortunately much narrower than its title promises, being chiefly an analysis of the rigging of the 1971 elections, which were held to give the military government an aura of civilian legitimacy. The absence of any full-scale study of Indonesia's current political system in this collection is regrettable.

Elaine Capizzi has, on the other hand, broken new ground with her study of "Trade Unions under the New Order." She shows how the PKI-affiliated network of unions, SOBSI, was systematically destroyed by the military government. The generals have fostered their own system, SOKSI, which has not been inclined to threaten the interests of owners of enterprises. She is very critical of the response of the international trade-union movement to these developments within Indonesia, although this should come as no great surprise to anyone who has heard about CIA manipulation of the non-communist international labor federations.

Carmel Budiardjo has contributed an essential chapter on the continuing human tragedy of "Political Imprisonment in Indonesia." The massacres, though they should not be forgotten, are over, but for those who have already spent ten years as "tapols" (political prisoners) and face the prospect of a lifetime of confinement the nightmare goes on. This chapter is "must" reading for all who are not already familiar with this massive crime against human rights and a basic reference for those who aspire to do something about it. Also, we dare not forget what a powerful weapon of social control the threat of imprisonment represents to those still outside the prison gates.

Richard Payne's article on "British Investment in Indonesia" reflects the active concerns of the British-based group of writers; it is not without more general interest, since the British were a major power in Southeast Asia until recently, but activists of other nationalities will want to make their own surveys of companies which are profiting from the repressive policies of the new order. And, despite the optimistic title "Armed Struggle in Indonesia" given to his piece by Malcolm Caldwell, the evidence for guerrilla struggle is at present very meager. This is not surprising, given the brutally effective repression of the last ten years, particularly the decimation of cadres which began the decade of Suharto's rule. There is no doubt a great reservoir of suppressed discontent among

the people of Indonesia at present—even among those who may have initially greeted the anti-communist policies of the military and the ouster of Sukarno—but the organization of this into an effective resistance movement lies in the future. We have in any case no direct evidence of successful armed struggle, except in West Kalimantan which seems to represent the most serious threat to military rule now.

A select bibliography at the end of this volume appears to be more sketchy than selective, and there are no annotations. Further, many of the articles suggested for further reading are in publications which will not be easily accessible to many readers, but that is due more to the state of Indonesia studies than the fault of the authors of this volume, who have themselves contributed many of the items in the bibliography in their efforts to publicize the real state of affairs in Indonesia.

There was never a time when the white man said he was trying to help the Indian get into the mainstream of American life that he did not also demand that the Indian give up land, water, minerals, timber, and other resources which would enrich the white man.

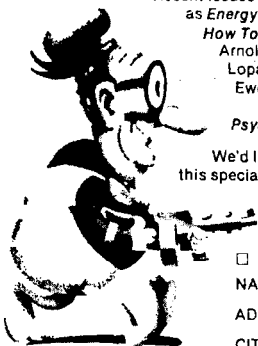
—Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*

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CORRESPONDENCE

REVOLUTIONARY BACKWARDNESS

After five years as a blue-collar worker, what makes me most pessimistic about the possibilities of revolution is not the backwardness of the working class, but the backwardness of the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries, by definition, consider themselves an advanced stratum and hence it is justifiable to be less than patient with their ineptness and failures. Rather than realize that their failures require a reassessment of their approach, too many backward radicals find it easier to dismiss the American working class as backward and stupid, blind to its own self-interest.

The American working class, however, is not so much backward as it is victim of a mass mixed consciousness, capable on certain levels of being very advanced, very open to radical ideas, and on other levels of being extremely contradictory—yes, very backward.

But this comes as no surprise. Revolutionary ideas do not develop spontaneously, out of the blue. The mass mixed consciousness is the result of the struggle of the sensibilities of workers against the intellectual straitjacket which capitalism provides so well through its educational and socializational institutions. The ability to perceive the interrelatedness of all things is discouraged. Social problems are perceived as isolated phenomena, unrelated to a society as a whole; and isolated problems, it is taught, can be remedied without shaking the social system.

But reality has a way of confronting such social science fiction. Workers don't always have the right answers, but their instincts as intelligent beings pry them loose of the system's grasp on some issues at certain times. Sometimes they even reach

conclusions more correct than the operative assumptions of the American Left. In analyzing working-class consciousness it is crucial to observe both the actions and statements of working-class people in their daily existence. As Martin Glaberman, in his review of Aronowitz's *False Promises*, put it, "What workers *do* is at least as important as what workers *say*. . . . Consciousness is a complex totality of behavior and belief, of practice and verbalization, which is not a simple totalling of varied and sometimes contradictory events or characteristics."

For instance, how racist is a white worker who opposes school busing and blacks moving into his neighborhood, but defends blacks as co-workers on the job? I know of such a case. A black worker constantly came to work drunk. But the white worker, who mouthed racist opinions on other issues, always covered for him—did his work so he never got in trouble with the foreman. Some radicals would simply dismiss the white workers as racist pigs on the basis of remarks alone, without viewing the total picture.

The most critical instance of revolutionary backwardness is in regard to the unions. This is crucial since it marks the major arena in which the Left attempts to relate to the industrial working class. It is in this area, especially, that young workers, black and white, have reached more advanced conclusions than the leftists.

The revolutionaries fail to realize that the unions have long since been integrated into the capitalist apparatus, used primarily to discipline the work force, maintain labor peace, sow the illusion of democratic freedom for the laboring class, and, when absolutely necessary, act as a safety valve for working-class discontent. Although they may not phrase it in exactly the same terms, most young workers have reached precisely these conclusions. For the most part, they view unions as a form of job insurance. They want a union to represent them, the same way they would want a lawyer to represent them if they were arrested—it is the defense mechanism provided by the system. Rather than being an organization for struggle, the union has, to varying degrees, become a brake on the class struggle.

Workers have found that the unions will fight in their interests only under pressure. Few workers waste their time attending union meetings, except at contract time. Organizing a group of angry workers to show up at such meetings, booing and yelling, hurling tomatoes, garbage, and folding chairs at the dais, is a frequent tactic to impress the union not to sell out too cheap.

The revolutionaries, however, still operate in the unions with the same basic approach they have had for decades—recapture control of the unions. Unions are still viewed as legitimate defense organizations for the class, though bureaucratically deformed. The main problem with the unions is perceived as one of leadership and the lack of correct ideological perspective of that leadership. To build a base in the unions, a prerequisite to contesting positions of leadership, revolutionary politics must be submerged. Arguing your politics, it is widely felt, will only turn off potential supporters. The foremost goal is not the introduction of revolutionary ideas to the workers, as part of a program to raise their class consciousness, but rather the opportunist goal of election to union office. Usually this activity manifests itself as some phony rank-and-file caucus front group.

The disillusion and ferment within the class is intense and sharpened by the economic developments of recent months. But the workers are not presented with meaningful political alternatives. The failure of the Left to present revolutionary alternatives may ultimately result in a turn to a Wallaceite movement, which would be the only political movement appealing to the workers' alienation from traditional mainstream politics. The great task facing revolutionaries is to take the mixed consciousness further to revolutionary consciousness. But it cannot be done by leading stupid reformist struggles or creating meaningless transitional programs, which are essentially the solutions of a dead liberalism. Nor can it be done by the other extreme of avoiding practical activity, which is characteristic of certain Marxist groups, or grouplets, which avoid the reformist malaise by limiting themselves primarily to sectarian haggling.

While virtually everyone on the Left pays lip service to the concept of the working class as the agent of social revolution, the general character of the movement's relations with workers is one of condescension. Revolutionary solutions to working-class problems are never presented because the workers are supposedly too backward to understand. While in the liberated confines of their living rooms the revolutionaries talk of abolishing the wage system, to the workers they talk only of wage increases and escalator clauses.

Most radicals accept the Leninist contention that the working class does not spontaneously develop revolutionary consciousness. The daily experiences of the class struggle itself, however, do produce an antagonism toward the bosses and the ruling class.

The revolutionaries fail miserably to help the class jump from this spontaneous rebelliousness to genuine revolutionary consciousness, a jump absolutely necessary for the liberation of the class. The excuses used are "the workers are not yet ready for the ideas," "the time is not ripe," "the balance of forces this and that." Restated, these alibis can be expressed as: "We cannot argue revolutionary ideas to the working class because the class has not yet developed revolutionary consciousness spontaneously." But this returns us to the starting premise. If this consciousness cannot be reached spontaneously, then it requires the direct activity of revolutionary militants. That conclusion is as inescapable today as it was in Lenin's time.

By failing to confront the mixed consciousness, the Left actually further perpetuates the problem, further obfuscates the issues, and functions for the continued existence of the capitalist system by forestalling the possible development of revolutionary consciousness among workers.

Such development is constantly short-circuited by radical-led and -inspired dead-end reformist movements. Because of their character, these reformist struggles always fail. Workers are constantly learning that victories within the system are illusory. This can lead either to reinforcing the prevailing cynicism about struggle in general or to the recognition that the only way to real change is through social revolution. This is where the intervention of revolutionaries is required—to draw the lessons, not to sow illusions and perpetuate the reformist myth.

While workers may not yet be ready to adopt revolutionary ideas en masse, they are willing to read revolutionary publications dealing realistically, in "non-Marxese" language, with their work situation as well as politics. In my work with the now defunct *Wildcat* and *Worker & Soldier*, we always found that the reliability of our newspaper coverage of workplace events was crucial to "tolerating" our radical politics. While not necessarily convinced, workers were exposed to the ideas and the ideas were introduced into workplace discussions.

The Left's failure in developing organic ties with the working class further undercuts revolutionary developments by driving thousands of activists from its ranks. Many are burnt-out, beating their heads against a stone wall, accomplishing nothing, following a backward strategy designed to accomplish nothing. In many ways, I suppose I am one of those thousands. Unless serious consideration is given to the goal of revolution, the movement

is reduced to a subculture of nice people, who enjoy nice company and nice thoughts. I am not interested in that.

The revolutionary backwardness which is responsible for this situation could not have been more beneficial for capitalism if it were formulated on the drawing boards of the CIA. To overcome its effects requires a concerted effort at developing a genuine revolutionary program for the United States, in the context of an international revolutionary struggle, simultaneous with day-to-day practical work in the industrial shops, to ensure that our politics are always influenced by the reality of working-class existence.

Revolution must be conceived as an immediate task. Otherwise circumstances may present us with a working class which thrusts itself into a revolutionary situation without the necessary consciousness to fulfill successfully its historic responsibilities.

Robert Grevin

April 1975
New York City

Strange though it may sound, in capitalist society the working class also can pursue a bourgeois policy, if it forgets its emancipatory aims, reconciles itself to wage slavery, and restricts its concerns to joining up now with one bourgeois party and now with another for the sake of seeming "improvements" in its servile position.

—Lenin, December 1912

* * *

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

—Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*

PLEASE NOTE: Our address, as of January 1974, is 62 West 14th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011. Mail is still going to 116 West 14th Street and much of it is not being forwarded to us.

MONTHLY REVIEW and MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS

(Continued from inside front cover)

other publications hampers our own efforts to reach potential new subscribers. We have therefore decided to make such exchanges in carefully selected cases. We will not put the list up for sale, as many publications and organizations do, and will agree to exchanges only where we think the material to be sent to MR subscribers will have real interest for a substantial proportion of them. The practice of exchanging (or selling) lists is of course all but universal in the publishing field, and there seems to be no good reason why MR should continue to deny itself whatever benefits may be achievable by this method of promotion.

Few if any countries in the world have suffered longer or more severely from a combination of imperialist and local military oppression than Indonesia, and as usual Washington has been the ringleader in this sinister enterprise in killing, torturing, and/or starving literally tens of millions of people. It is therefore entirely appropriate and warmly to be welcomed that a campaign to secure release of Indonesian political prisoners is being launched in this country on the model of campaigns already under way in Holland and Britain. Funds are of course urgently needed. Contributions and requests for further information should be addressed to Tapol—The U.S. Campaign for the Release of Indonesian Political Prisoners, P.O. Box 609, Montclair, N.J. 07042.

A friend in Zambia has written us: "For the past couple of years the University Bookshop has carried MR. I do hope that most English-speaking African countries are also receiving copies. If not, perhaps you could get someone to contact various bookshops and get orders placed on a regular basis." The only "someone" we can think of is an interested MR reader who will take the initiative to encourage his/her local bookstore to place a standing order for each issue of MR. We request readers in Africa (and elsewhere) to take note of this suggestion, either by approaching the bookstore owner directly or sending us the names to whom we may write.

Several years ago the Madrid publishing house Editorial Tecnos contracted to do a Spanish-language edition of Paul Sweezy's *The Present as History*. When the book was finally translated and printed, Franco's censors stepped in and banned it. We were therefore both interested and somewhat surprised to receive recently a note from Tecnos saying that they had just published the first printing of the book under the title *Presente como Historia*. We look forward to the time when many more MR Press books will be able to be published in post-Franco Spain.

We pointed out in this space last April that Dr. Haydée Alarcón, one of the group responsible for bringing MR out in Spanish during the years when it was published in Chile, had been arrested and was being held incommunicado in one of the junta's jails. Since she received part of her dental training at the University of Pennsylvania, we made a special appeal to students and faculty there to protest and demand her release. We had several responses, including the following from a U. of Penn. undergraduate: "My friends and I gathered fifty signatures which we will send to the Chilean Embassy. Keep us informed." The latest information, unfortunately, is that she is still imprisoned, along with thousands of other victims of the Chilean *gorilla* regime. A petition demanding the release of Haydée Alarcón and four other imprisoned Chilean women is being circulated by Action for Women in Chile, 15 Claremont Ave., Apt. 62, New York, N.Y. 10027. Please write for copies and gather as many signatures as you can. There must be no let-up in the pressure brought to bear on the butchers of Santiago.

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